

FAIENCES





Introduction

Dealers often have a special affinity with the objects that come into their possession. As a result they are sometimes conflicted between placing the object to their inventory for sale or retaining it for themselves. The some of the works of art in this exhibition were initially collected by Sleiman Aboutaam and remained in the family where they were admired and studied by his sons, Ali and Hicham. Inspired by their father, who instilled in his sons a great love for and first-hand knowledge of antiquities, Ali and Hicham, as the second generation of antiquarians, continued their father's practice and added works of art to that core, private collection of faience objects.

The faience works of art on view in this exhibition are, therefore, possessed of a certain sentimental value because they served the Aboutaam family as examples of masterpieces in faience. Their attraction was furthered by knowing that these works of art came from famed, older established collections of such connoisseurs as Charles Gillot, Baron Empain, Félix-Bienaimé Feuardent, San Giorgi, Daniel-Marie Fouquet, Spencer-Churchill, Charles Ratton, Gawain McKinley, Guy Weil Goudchaux or Roger Liechti. Those collectors were known for their aesthetic taste and the objects in their possession were traditionally of the highest quality.

We think that this collective attraction to faience resonates with the properties of this special material, whose scintillating, reflective characteristics imbue their surfaces with a sparkling quality often associated with gem stones. It is no wonder, then, that the ancients regarded faience as a privileged material and saw in it symbolic properties which were associated with their spiritual view of their cosmos. For the Egyptians the material was *techenet*, and its turquoise-green or lapis-blue hues connoted resurrection and rebirth, on the model of the diurnal rising and setting of the sun, just as the white hues connoted purity and cleanliness.

We are, therefore, delighted to be able present this exhibition in which one will find an extraordinary range of objects coming from cultures representing the wide spectrum of the ancient world. Intercalated with examples from all periods of ancient Egypt one will find early Sumerian creations of the third millennium BC, exquisite examples from Bronze Age Ugarit, Ras Shamra, and early Susa. These are complemented by sophisticated works from the early Iron Age assigned to the Western Asiatic centers at Ziwiyeh, Ras Shamra, and Assyria. Examples from the Hellenistic Syria, the Sassanian and Roman Imperial Empires represent the most recent creations in this most malleable of ancient artistic materials.

Phoenix Ancient Art SA

Faience and Glass Materials in Ancient Times

In the Mediterranean, including Egypt and Mesopotamia, exotic materials spread from the borders of the known world, from Indus to the Red Sea and the Balkans to the Baltic. Precious stones, ivory, gold, silver, sea shell, and amber were used in the manufacture of art works, a privilege of the elite. When natural products were not available, synthetic materials would take over and put complex techniques into action. Between exotic materials and synthetics, the products began to show complementarities, which can be observed in the types of works, their social status, and symbolic meaning (Caubet 2010). This is particularly true for the use of glass materials.

At the dawn of their history, Egypt and the Near East played a founding role in the implementation of glass materials. These materials contained both silica (obtained from sand), as a basic component of their composition, and metallic oxides for their coloring. Over the course of time, these techniques have been adopted by the rest of the Mediterranean world, and by other non-western civilizations, such as the Islamic world and the Far East. Nowadays, they still form part of our environment (Bouquillon *et alii* 2007).

Faience, in the archaeological sense (different from the modern meaning, which designates the products of Faenza, a city near Bologna, in Italy), consists of a body made of silica and lime, covered with a glaze. This glaze is a thin, transparent vitreous slip or cover. Frit differs from faience by the absence of the glaze, the most famous frit being the “Egyptian blue”, a copper silicate pigment, which can be used as paint or re-fired and molded into small beads, figurines, or vessels. Glass, obtained by the complete fusion of silica, is shaped or rod-formed while hot and can be easily recycled.

The bright colors and their luster, which are the main attractive features of faience and other glass productions, are obtained by the use of metallic oxides. The earliest and most frequently seen glaze color is light blue which is made with copper oxides. It may vary to light green when the composition includes lead impurities in the ore. Copper also gives “Egyptian blue” frit its color, while brown and black are from a mix of iron and manganese. Dark blue color is made from cobalt and yellow and orange are from lead antimonite. The less frequently seen colors like red and pink come from iron oxide and for the white color, antimonate might have served as an opacifier.

The first productions were small adornments made in simple molds with the color palette being limited to blue, green, and yellow. In the middle of the 3rd millennium, Sumerians gave these small ornaments the appearance of genies, symbols of the divine world, like this **eagle with outspread wings** (1), an emblem of the god of the storm, or the wise **bearded bull**, a guardian of the gates of the rising sun. In Egypt, one of the first uses of faience in architecture was the small squares that decorated the royal tombs of the Old Kingdom.

In the early 2nd millennium, faience craftsmen became bolder and the first figurines appeared. In Egypt, there were **hippos** (2 and 3) with blue bodies decorated with lotus flowers and graceful female statuettes, known as “concubines of the deceased”, that poetically evoked the regenerating waters of the Nile with their deep blue color. Meanwhile, in Mesopotamia and the Levant, the production of “naked goddesses” and symbolic animals, such as lions and bulls, has begun. The blue and black faience figurines copied terracotta examples. These new productions demonstrate the sharing of technological know-how (Aruz *et alii* 2008). They also display the large spread of beliefs in the power of both, the gods of the storm, and the deities of fecundity, also known as Hathor in Egypt and Astarte and Ishtar in the East.

Small vessels for personal use, such as **tripod goblets** (9), or **lid pyxides** (8), where the lid was maintained by two tenons, also appeared in this period and flourished in a wider range of colors in the following period. The **small cup with a handle** (11) supported by a hand in relief was probably inspired by Egyptian cosmetic spoons, but the technique and color range of the head of the water bird, which terminates the handle, make this work a pure Levantine production of the Middle Bronze Age (circa 1700), as attested in Ugarit for instance (Matoian *in* Bouquillon *et alii* 2007).

In the second half of the 2nd millennium, the period known as the New Kingdom in Egypt and the Late Bronze Age in Mesopotamia and the Levant, a real technical revolution occurred in the industry of glass materials. With the perfect mastery of their mechanical properties and the use of new coloring oxides, glass was invented, a material whose manufacturing secrets are recorded in technical treatises and written in cuneiform signs. The processes developed for the making of rod-formed glass vessels or mosaic glass objects remained in use for millennia and the color palette of faience extended by the use of new oxides. Recent physico-chemical analyses of the colorings have revealed recipes specific to certain areas, and although the main components remain similar (copper, lead antimonate, iron manganese,

cobalt, etc.), the presence of impurities in the ores enables us to identify their provenance (Kaczmarczyk 2007). Added to these specific recipes were stylistic features. In Mesopotamia and the Levant, a popular feature was the range of yellow, black and light green colors that were often applied in broad bands. In Egypt, the "Egyptian manner" was more preferred where there would be a linear black drawing on a deep blue copper or cobalt background. This feature was eventually adopted by the Levant. And frit, wrongly called "Egyptian blue", was produced almost everywhere for the making of small objects (cylinder-seal (13)) like ornaments and amulets, as well as larger pieces such as statuettes (statuette of Taweret (47)) and vases.

During this period (Egyptian New Kingdom/Late Bronze Age), the uses of glass materials were extremely diversified. They started to be employed in architectural decoration for royal buildings with one of the best preserved example being the palace of Seti I, at Qantir. Egyptian palatial decoration included small plants or geometric elements. A **bunch of grapes** (21), **rosettes** (38), and **ornamental balls** (22 and 23) (see Caubet, Pierrat-Bonnefois 2005) would complete figurative panels that expressed the power of Pharaoh, the defeater of enemies represented as broken-winged birds. In Susa, in the Near East, there are remains of architectural decorations such as effigies of the Elamite kings made of glazed bricks that decorated the walls of the temple of their chief god.

The other uses of glass during the Egyptian New Kingdom/Late Bronze Age were extremely varied. In Egypt, they primarily served for objects related to worship and funerary furniture, such as, canopic vessels and **servants of the deceased** (*ushabtis*) (33). In the Near East, they were implemented for objects associated with the world of power and men, as well as the world of women and house. **Cylinder seals*** (13) were the main instrument of administration and power and some precious stones objects were also imitated in faience, such as ceremonial weapons, brain teasers, and elements of chariots which referred to the royal ideology. The objects associated with the female world included jewels, sewing implements, and cosmetics boxes whose shape and decoration refer to fecundity beliefs incarnated in a famous astral goddess. These items symbolized the epiphany of the deity, who appeared in the guise of the mask of an adorned woman, a corolla flower, or a star. Very typical of this spirit is a group of rectangular pendants in the shape of an adorned **female mask** (14 and 15). There is a wide range of polychromatic faience vessels which were intended to contain cosmetics, spices, and condiments. These vessels, often covered with a lid to keep the scent fresh, were mainly used at ceremonial banquets and they bore a highly symbolic decoration linked to the ideology of power or the hope of fecundity. Goblets with the face of a goddess are part of the same class as the pendants with a female mask. The small cup in the shape of a **lying and tied goat or gazelle** (19) evoked the Egyptian rule in Asia, symbolized by these animals. Cups in the shape of a **lion's head** (12; see Yon 2008) were another allusion to power and **cups** and **pyxides** (8 and 10) in the shape of corolla flowers (16) have petals of alternate colors, usually black, yellow and green, that symbolize the perfection of nature. These types of creations of Levantine workshops were internationally distributed, from Egypt to western Iran. During this international movement, there were many shapes derived from the Aegean world, like the conical rhyta and the stirrup jars, many of which were produced in faience. They have been adopted all throughout the eastern Mediterranean, and were probably used at banquets and libation rituals (Koehl 2003). Produced in the "Egyptian manner", with a blue background and black drawings, were the **blue bowls*** (18 and 36), decorated with Nilotic scenes (a *tilapia* fish holding lotus stalks and boats in the papyrus thickets), or with scenes related to the worship of the goddess Hathor, who appeared as a female mask. These works certainly originated in Egypt, but they have been largely widespread and imitated in the Levant, mostly in Cyprus (Peltenburg 2007). The fertility symbolism in Egypt, associated with the Nile and its creatures, would have also been understood and appreciated in the Levant.

The same technique with a blue background was used in Egypt for the funerary furniture, which remained proper to Egyptian workshops, away from the international movement. The **servants of the deceased** (39, 40 and 41) were covered with a thick deep blue glaze, on which stood the painted inscription.

The turn of the 2nd and 1st millennia, otherwise known as the Third Intermediate Period, was characterized in Egypt by a wide range of productions of great technical skills. It is worth noting the decorative richness of the bead nets that wrapped the mummies. A highly refined technique of openwork carving was used for the manufacture of protective talismans and **amulets** (42) depicting gods or magical symbols (**carved udjat-eye** (80)). The Eastern Delta specialized in the production of **dotted faience statuettes** (43 and 44) that represented genies that favored a happy motherhood (Bulté 2003). These small magical objects have been pretty successful in the Levant and Cyprus in the early centuries of the 1st millennium.

Technical virtuosity increased in the Saite Dynasty (6th century). Subtle green colors and inscriptions finely hollowed in the surface were features that were especially visible in furniture objects intended for the deceased. The **ushabtis** servants (58, 59, 60 and 61) were more delicately modeled than their painted predecessors of the New Kingdom and the **goblets** (32) were accurately executed. During this period, in the Levant, scarabs, amulets, and statuettes were characterized by a strong Egyptian influence in the themes and workmanship, but showed stylistic, epigraphic, and technical features that make them Levantine productions. The most represented gods and genies were Ptah Patek, **Bes** (46), alone and with his wife, Beset, Isis, alone and suckling Horus (71), Horus, and Nefertum. Further east, the Assyrian and western Iranian world continued the traditions favoring the yellow-white-black polychromy that had appeared in the Late Bronze Age. The most dramatic achievements were seen in the architectural decoration that unfolded in Susa, Assyria, and then in Babylon in the 8th-6th centuries. Faience polychromatic tableware, **large jar** (55) is often compared to precious metal vessels. The figural and narrative decoration focused on the motif of the "sacred tree" can be viewed as a symbol of the perfect balance of the world and nature, surrounded by genies and animals romping in a stylized landscape. Decorations of alternate petals, inherited from the traditions of the previous period, adorned the vessels of this period produced in Mesopotamia, Western Iran, Susa, and even the borders of Iran and Eastern Anatolia (region of Ziwiye), **flask** (53).

Thanks to the Orientalizing phenomenon (7th-6th century B.C.), which spread forms and techniques of Levantine origin all throughout the Greek archaic world, the Greek sanctuaries saw the arrival of various polychromatic faience perfume vessels, **hedgehog** (65 and 66), both Egyptian-inspired (vase in the shape of a **tilapia fish** (67) and Greek-inspired, **bearded head** (64). Long attributed to Rhodian workshops, these objects have been recognized as products of Naucratis where a large Greek colony had settled. It seems that the pre-existing Egyptian workshops have served as mentors to Greek craftsmen.

The Persian period (6th-4th century B.C.) introduced a genuine international art movement where very similar works appeared all throughout the Empire, from Egypt up to Iran and the Levant. Distant workshops produced the same large magical amulets in the shape of a Horus **udjat-eye** (69). They also made the same small mortars and **cups**, whose rims were decorated with reclining lions in high relief (85). All techniques were combined and the production of "Egyptian blue" frit reached an unprecedented level of virtuosity for large-sized pieces (**hippos** (84), **pomegranate-vase** (31) and **alabastron** (83)). The use of glazed terracotta tableware definitely established itself in the Near East during the Persian period. Applying glaze on clay solved the common problems of differential shrinkage during the cooling between the clay body and the glass glaze. This technique allowed the use of the wheel which ultimately led to an acceleration of production. After exercising this technique in the Levant at the end of the Late Bronze Age and during the Assyrian period, this invention spread from the Persian period onwards to inner Syria and Mesopotamia, competing with the polished pottery of Greek tradition that was still in use on the Mediterranean coast.

The glazed terracotta technique never reached Egypt during the Ptolemaic period. They were under the rule of a Greek dynasty and remained faithful to brilliant siliceous faience productions, **amphora** (89). Amulets and figurines of deities, bust of a large **Isis** (71) favored a pale turquoise hue and were often highlighted with yellow. Workshops in the Memphis area (known as Mit Rahineh) created a drawing style in underglaze with a blue and pale green bicolored effect, which served for the manufacture of divine statuettes and cult vases (**lamp or incense burner support** (90)). This specific technique was imitated in inner Syria for a distinctive group of **small cups** decorated with rosettes (86 and 87). The Egyptian workshops of the Roman period stuck to the ancient tradition and kept using siliceous faience to create **vases** (94) decorated with a foliage pattern in relief, emerging in light green from a deep blue background. However, they began borrowing some common styles and decorations from the Western Roman productions, particularly, the imitation of precious metal vessels. This western inspiration, that arose with a Pharaonic millennium tradition, also characterized small adornments (**frit Roman bust ring** (91)).

In the late Hellenistic period, the first lead glazes appeared in the eastern Mediterranean, perhaps in the major Ionian Greek centers (Hochuli-Gysel A., 2002). Their golden brown color clearly imitated metal vessels. The **amphora** (96), **jug** (97), and **skyphos** (a drinking vessel with two handles) (95), were all part the symposias and Greek banquets during which wine was mixed, shared, and drunk following an elaborate social ritual.

The ritualized consumption of strong drinks and delicacies was adopted by the Parthian, and then the Sassanian dynasty (3rd century B.C. - 3rd century A.D., then 3rd - 6th century A.D.). Originally coming from Iran, these conquerors seized the remains of the Achaemenid

Persian Empire and competed with the successors of Alexander, then with Rome. They adopted the material culture, with the public architecture of palaces, baths, theaters, etc. One of their capital cities, Nisa (Turkmenistan), had a banquet hall decorated with frescoes, which stored nearly eighty ivory rhyta, a drinking vessel in the shape of a horn for the guests. There are faience versions of these **rhyta** (99), generally decorated with a royal head surmounting the neck. It might be a tribute of allegiance that would have been concluded or renewed at these banquets. Parthian and Sassanian workshops adopted the technique of glazed terracotta, especially for tableware, and this technique served for the manufacture of sarcophagi and cult items, such as this **incense burner** carried by two bulls (98) that would have been used to purify the guests at banquets.

In the late ancient times, the conquest of Islam led to a brief interruption of activities related to luxury industries, including those of glass materials. The productions started again, with renewed vigor and new techniques from the late 8th century on, in all major creative centers of the eastern Mediterranean and of the Near East.

Annie Caubet

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Three Amulets Representing Animals

Mesopotamian, middle of the 3rd millennium B.C. (ca. 2500–2300 B.C.)

Lion-headed eagle
Faience, H: 1.9 cm (1:1)

Despite minor surface wear (no trace of glaze is preserved), one easily recognizes the image of an eagle with spread wings. Two suspension holes pierce the top of the wings.

The triangular shape of the *plaque*, with its blunt angles, is surmounted by the small plastic head of a wild cat (probably a lion) whose short powerful muzzle, deeply hollowed eyes, flat nose, and rounded ears can still be clearly recognized. The body (which represents a bird or prey) is in low relief; the paws are spread out and the tail is fan-shaped. Linear incisions, visible especially on the back, indicate the animal's feathers.

The lion-headed eagle, a winged hybrid figure with the body and legs of a raptor bird and the head of a wild cat, is a monster that is well documented as early as the third millennium B.C. In Mesopotamian iconography, the creature appears on important monuments discovered in several cities (e.g., Ur, Mari, Ebla, Tello), while in contemporary mythology, the lion-headed eagle is known for his fight against Ninurta, god of fertility, who defeated him. Named Imdugud in Sumerian and Anzu, Asakku, or Asaq in other Near Eastern languages, this monster had a repulsive appearance. His presence caused rivers to boil, killing all aquatic life, and he attacked human beings by bringing pestilence. These amulets were rarely made of faience, but they are nevertheless attested in stone or shell from many Mesopotamian sites.

Bull with two protomes
Dark green faience, H: 5.3 cm (1:1)

The surface is largely worn, but traces of the dark green glaze are still preserved in the deep incisions marking the anatomical details. The small plate was reglued and pierced at its center by a single suspension hole. The legs of the bull on the right are lost.

The amulet is rectangular and flat, provided with two triangular heads. Despite the strong stylization and the summary rendering, the pair of small curved horns and the vertical lines indicating the coat of the chest were enough for the maker to characterize the represented animals as bulls. According to their usual typology, both bovines stare forward and are seated with their legs folded under the body, which is composed only of two forequarters.

Bull with two protomes
Faience, Preserved H: 2.1 cm (1:1)

Only the right half of the amulet is preserved; no trace of glaze is currently visible. The suspension hole was pierced in the center of the amulet, between the two protomes.

The amulet represents the same subject as (b). Despite the breaks and the miniature size, its fabrication is more careful and realistic. The bull can be identified by the triangular head with small stylized eyes, the square chest furrowed with vertical incisions, and the legs folded under the body.

Most often carved from stone (limestone, serpentine, lapis-azuli), but rarely made of faience, amulets representing two-faced bulls were spread throughout the entire Near Eastern world during the third millennium. Examples made of gold leaf, used as necklace pendants, come from the Royal Tombs of Ur.

PROVENANCE

Acquired by M. Sleiman Aboutaam in Beirut in the early 1980's from Nassib Sabbagh.

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Statuette of a Hippopotamus

Egyptian, Middle Kingdom (Dynasty 11–13, ca. 2040–1650 B.C.)

Blue faience

L: 18 cm (l:l)

The gray paste shows a superficial white layer just under the glaze, which perfectly retains its intense blue shade with many decorations painted in black lines. The head and the left hind leg are lost; the other three legs have been reglued and are partially chipped. The statuette is larger than average for its type.

The animal, whose head was certainly directed forward, stands firmly on its short, squat legs. Enlivening the surface of its skin are vegetal patterns that imitate Nilotic plants — lilies and papyrus here, while insects, frogs, or birds appear on other examples. The direction of movement is suggested by the arrangement of the legs (the animal is walking) and by the plant elements that seem to float on the skin, as if the hippopotamus were moving on the bottom of the river or preparing to leave the swamp among the rich vegetation of a thicket. The potter's sharp sense of observation is also reflected in the extremely accurate and proportionate rendering of the body's volumes, which correspond closely to the anatomy of the species: rounded croup, delineated shoulders and thighs, bulging abdomen, thickness of the skin highlighted by rolls of fat, and small triangular tail.

An animal both familiar and feared, the hippopotamus, which appears frequently and from earliest times in Egyptian iconography, caused extensive damage to agriculture in devastating the crops because of its size and aggressiveness. It was dangerous for men and for navigation. Discovered mostly in undecorated tombs, these statuettes could be substitutes for painted scenes; according to some scholars, the rorq n, although often uncertain, usually indicates a date between the late First Intermediate Period and Dynasty 12.

To the Egyptians, hippopotamuses had an ambivalent meaning: the male was generally associated with Seth, the god of evil, while the female, known as Hedjet, the white, had a positive image related to childbirth and infancy, which she protected in the form of Taweret, a fertility and mother goddess. Hunting hippopotamuses was also synonymous with achieving victory over evil and maintaining order in the universe.

See also (3).

PROVENANCE

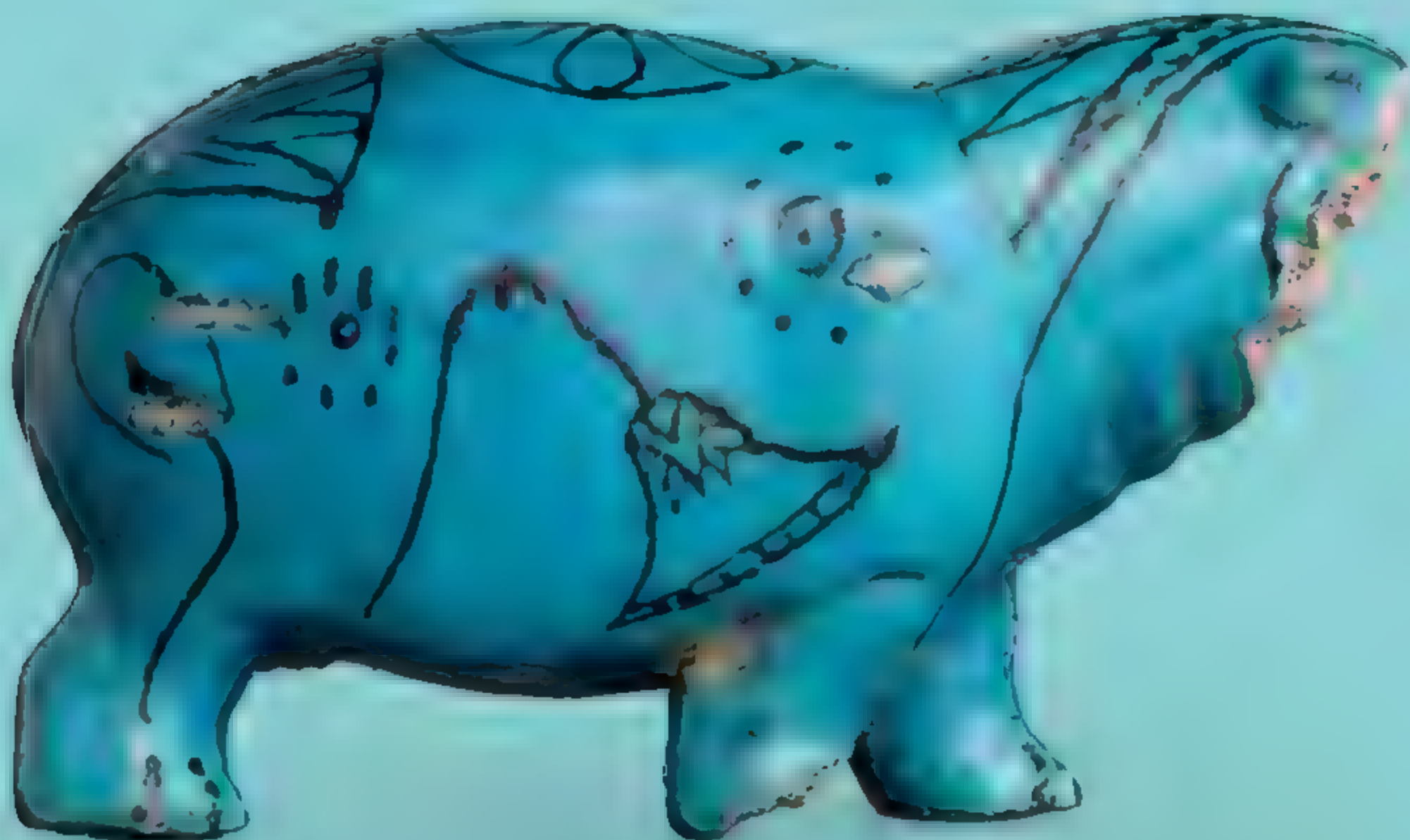
Ex: Swiss collection; acquired in 1992.

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Statuette of a Hippopotamus

Egyptian, Middle Kingdom (Dynasty 11–13, ca. 2040–1650 B.C.)

Blue faience

L: 20.3 cm (1:1)

A charming example of a type of figurine found in many Middle Kingdom tombs, this hippopotamus strides forward on four legs. Rolls of fat hang from its neck, powerful jaws hint at the large teeth within, and great bulging eyes peer forward. Except for the ears, now lost, it is complete, but it has been partially reglued (the left foreleg, probably ancient, might come from another statuette). In this type of statuette, the legs of the animal were often broken, perhaps to “paralyze” the creature and prevent it from harming the deceased in the afterlife. This figure shows evidence of such a practice: three of its four legs were broken during ancient times and have been restored. The two holes under the legs suggest a modern pedestal.

The statuette was molded in faience, a combination of ground copper, lime, and quartz. When fired, the substance produced the glassy finish highly prized by the Egyptians. The color of the faience would vary, depending on the mixture of the main components. This lovely shade of blue-green is reminiscent of the waters of the Nile. The lotus buds and blooms that decorate the animal's skin recall the ubiquitous presence along the river; their black outlines are partially visible, especially when viewed against the light. The specific color arrangement on the pachyderm's body probably results from a problem that occurred during the firing process: the back of the animal is now grayish, while the abdomen and lower neck are blue and covered with a thick crust where the glaze has accumulated.

A seemingly docile animal, the hippopotamus was an ever-present danger to the ancient Egyptians. It inhabited the swampy banks of the Nile and was capable of decimating crops and injuring people. Images of hippopotamuses, however, whether painted on tomb walls or crafted as amulets and statuettes, embodied both malevolent and benevolent forces. A female, for instance, frequently represented the goddess Taweret, patroness of childbirth, while a male was often regarded as a harmful presence associated with the god Seth. During the Old Kingdom, pharaohs were expected to slay a hippopotamus, a symbol of chaos, possibly to help maintain order in the universe. By the Middle Kingdom, statuettes of hippos were included in private burials, perhaps to allow the deceased the chance to “kill” the animal, thereby increasing their chances of gaining entrance to the afterlife.

The waters of the Nile, as well as the lotus plant that opened and closed daily with the rising and setting sun, were potent symbols of rebirth and regeneration. Perhaps the animal was adorned in this manner in a further effort to ward off evil and chaos, and to reinforce these themes, which were so central to Egyptian burial practices.

See also (2).

PROVENANCE

Ex-Ben Heller collection, New York, 1978, ex-Bernard H. Friedman collection, New York — East Hampton, acquired from Charles Ratton, Paris.

PUBLISHED IN

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BAUM N., *The Representation of Polygonum Senegalense Meisn.*, in *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 74 (1998), pp. 248–252.









Statuette of a Seated Female Dwarf (?)

Egyptian, Middle Kingdom (Dynasty 12–13, ca. 1850–1700 B.C.)

Blue faience

H: 4.7 cm (*enlarged*)

The figurine is currently attached to a wooden pedestal; the left forearm and probably the lower legs are lost. Despite the presence of a layer of patina, the glaze retains its original luster. The anatomical details (hair, breasts, pubic area, eyes, etc.) and the belt are painted black. The woman, who appears to be seated, is represented in a strictly frontal view. Her bent arms enable her to touch her shoulders and hair with her hands. Her dwarfism is translated by the unusual proportions, such as her oversized head, prominent abdomen, and short legs and arms. Except for the dotted painted belt that encircles her waist, the dwarf seems to be nude. Her hair covers her head like a thick black cap and falls down to her neck and shoulders. On the skull, bald on the entire forehead, the mass of hair is parted in the middle by a blue line. **The sexual dimension of the image is highlighted by the use of black paint to indicate the pubis and the breasts.**

This statuette can certainly be linked to a large class of contemporary images representing nude women, sometimes without legs: male and female dwarfs, nurses, and others. According to V. Dasen, these figures had multiple purposes and meanings: in daily life, they represented a servant and, as such, also had their proper place among the grave goods of the house owner. More generally, whether they come from a domestic or a funerary sphere, or were deposited in a sanctuary (usually dedicated to Hathor, goddess of love and rebirth), they were closely associated with the world of fertility and fecundity. Probably, as was the case for images of Bes and for other talismans (talisman "d'heureuse maternité" "happy motherhood" talismans), these dwarf statuettes that carried strong prophylactic values were thought to especially protect pregnant women, women in labor, and young children from evil spirits.

This piece has only a very few precise parallels, the closest example being an almost identical figurine housed in the Egyptian rooms of the Basel Museum (inv. Bs Ae 1093), which represents a female dwarf in the same pose, seated on the floor with her knees raised and arms bent, touching her hair.

PROVENANCE

Ex: R.H. Blanchard (1875–1936) collection, Blanchard's Egyptian Museum, Cairo, inv. no. 3513A (found at Abydos)

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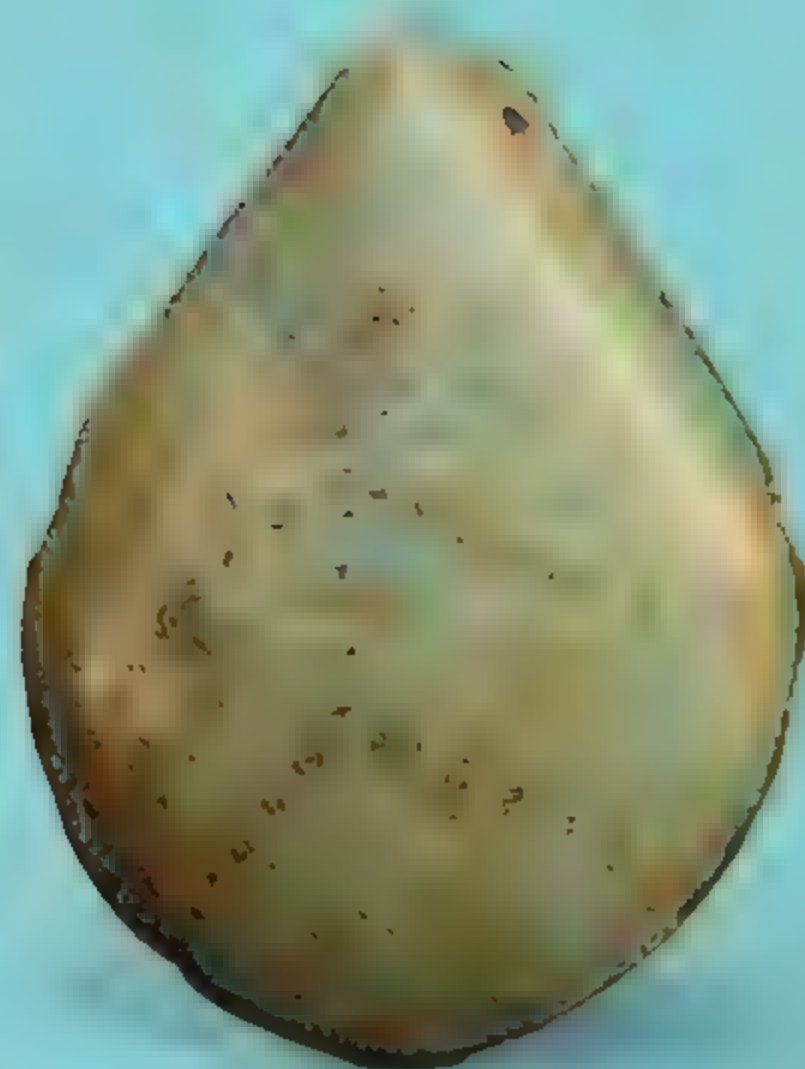
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BULTE J., *Talismans égyptiens d'heureuse maternité* (Paris, 1991).





Shell-Shaped Pendant

Egyptian, Middle Kingdom (ca. 20th–18th century B.C.)

Greenish blue faience

L: 5.5 cm (*enlarged*)

Despite minor chips on the edge, the piece is complete and in very good condition. The color of the glaze, which partially retains its original luster, is covered with a brown patina in places. The surface shows tiny holes that may be the result of an imperfect firing.

The pendant represents the most classical form of a shell valve, with the domed upper part and one extremity triangular and pointed (in which the suspension hole of the amulet was pierced) and the other semicircular. Two or three chevrons dotted in black are still visible on the upper side. The top is flat and undecorated.

The use of small shells as amulets, worn as simple pendants or assembled in a necklace, has a long tradition that can be traced back at least to the Neolithic; the mollusks would generally come from the Red Sea, the Nile, or possibly the Mediterranean.

In the Middle Kingdom, shells in this shape (resembling an oyster) were called *wedja*, a term that also means “health.” Worn mostly by women, amulets and necklaces imitating the shape of these mollusks were therefore supposed to provide good health to their owners. Often found in tombs of wealthy court ladies, in which they were modeled and worked in noble materials (such as gold, silver, electrum, or semiprecious stones), as well as in poorer necropolises, where they were made of genuine shell, these amulets are virtually unknown in a faience version as presented here.

Another important class of gold—or real shell—objects bore the name of a pharaoh (Sesostris III or IV and Amenemhat II). According to some archaeologists, these would have had a military function, like “badges” indicating the king’s guard or another army corps.

PROVENANCE

Ex-Baron Empain (1852–1929) collection, Belgium.

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Fragment of a Magic Rod

Egyptian, Middle Kingdom (Dynasty 11–13, ca. 2040–1650 B.C.)

Blue-green glazed steatite

L: 6 cm (*enlarged*)

Except for minor cracks, the rod's glaze is in excellent condition. One of the unadorned long sides has a small hole in its center. The rod is cut from glazed steatite. The blue-green hue of the glaze carried strong connotations of rebirth, adding to its overall power.

Some soft stones, easy to shape (especially steatite or serpentine) were among the first materials used for glazed decoration. Because of the fine-grained texture and the stability during firing (steatite does not retract when heated to a high temperature) glaze adheres well to the stone surface and is more resistant than on other supports. When fired, steatite turns hard and thus was particularly well adapted for the production of small objects for daily use, such as amulet-seals, scarabs, or kohl vases. Its dark color (dark greenish gray or black) changes and typically turns into a beige-white.

This object is one of a series of elongated rectangular elements that would have been arranged in a row to form a magic rod.

Like many amulets, magic rods adorned with animal figures and other symbols—sometimes hieroglyphic signs, but always something possessing strong apotropaic powers—were part of the repertoire of magical objects included in the burials of private individuals. Their purpose was to protect the deceased on his journey to the afterlife. During the Middle Kingdom, the number of these amulets increased. The magic rods were also employed by the living. Scholars have suggested that they may have been used to guard infants and new mothers from everyday threats, such as diseases or poisonous animals, including snakes and scorpions.

On one of the long sides, in low relief are displayed from left to right an *ankh*, a *was*, a cobra, and a frog; the opposite side contains a *was*, a vulture, a cobra, and a frog. The symbols represented protection, and the seemingly ubiquitous *ankh* symbolized life. The cobra, an extremely potent symbol, was often seen adorning the crown of the pharaoh and acting as his protector. The vulture was associated with Nekhbet, tutelary goddess of Upper Egypt, and served as the inspiration for the crowns of Egyptian queens. Frogs inhabited the marshy edges of the Nile when the annual floodwaters retreated and came to embody fertility and regeneration; they may also represent the goddess Heket.

While some magic rods exhibit figures or symbols on their short sides, the end of this one is unadorned. As evidenced by the rod housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the small hole pierced on one of the undecorated sides would have held an animal figure in place by means of a small tenon.

Despite the seemingly unpleasant nature of some of the creatures depicted here, they appear to have served to ward off even more evil and dangerous forces bent on harming the deceased or the vulnerable living. These rods may also have functioned as protection for the sun on its dangerous journey through the underworld each night to be reborn with the dawn. In both cases, since the message of rebirth and regeneration is clear, the rod would have been a welcome inclusion in a burial.

PROVENANCE

Ex-J.-M. Talleux (1930–1995) collection, Grand Fort Philippe, France.

PUBLISHED IN

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ROBINS G., *The Art of Ancient Egypt*, (Cambridge (USA)), p. 115, fig. 124.





Amulet in the Form of a Four-sided Pillar

Egyptian, Second Intermediate Period (Hyksos Period, ca. 18th–16th century B.C.)

Blue-green glazed stone (steatite?)

H: 3.7 cm (*enlarged*)

The object is complete and virtually intact except for minor chips near the base and on the top. Even the glaze is largely preserved and retains its original luster. Since it is pierced lengthwise, it served as an amulet/pendant, probably for a necklace.

The small column is composed of four cylinders, each representing a bundle of papyrus. This symbolism is emphasized not only by the color (the green recalls the *wadjet*, a sign of prosperity) but also by the groups of horizontal incisions (extended by vertical lines) that depict the straps holding the plant stems together.

Each stem is adorned with a cartouche indicating the name of a single king whose identification remains uncertain. This king has two different names that are repeated in each cartouche of the opposed stems (thus, the same name is listed twice on the pendant). Several of the engraved signs have parallels on scarabs or other amulets of the late Middle Kingdom or the Hyksos period, which provide a precise indication for the dating of the object.

A piece in the Cairo Museum, fragmentary and known only through a drawing published by Reisner, most likely represents the same type of amulet with four cylinders and one of the two cartouches incised on this amulet—the one with the two groups of stacked vertical stems and the rising sun (?)—but, unfortunately, the publisher gives no reading for the name of the sovereign, which remains unknown. He was probably one of the many kinglets who succeeded in the various kingdoms and dynasties of the Hyksos period (besides, this term means “leaders of Foreign Countries” and thus stresses the many foreign clans established in Egypt at that time).

The name of this king, still unknown, might be read as “*kha-sha-ka-Re*” (the fate of the Ka of Re appears) and “*Men-ny-Maat-Re*” (secure is the one who belongs to the justice of Re).

PROVENANCE

Ex: Félix Bienaimé Feuardent (1819–1907) collection, France

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Circular Pyxis with a Lid

Near Eastern (Syria?), Middle Bronze Age (17th century B.C.)

Light blue and black faience

H: 4.6 cm - D: 7.8 cm (l:l)

The pyxis is complete and virtually intact. The light blue glaze, partially effaced, would have covered the entire exterior of the body, while the interior is painted in black. Some marks, visible on the base, suggest the use of a *pernette* (a small terracotta support) during the firing process.

The circular lid is too small to have belonged to this pyxis and is therefore not pertinent. Its upper surface does not retain any traces of glaze but only a cross and dots (?) painted in black. The interior is black. Two symmetrical holes would have allowed the threading of a string to attach this lid to a vessel.

The body of the pyxis is globular but squashed. The base is circular and flat. The low vertical neck has two tenon-handles that were pierced vertically to hold the lid or another type of closing system in place. The decoration painted in black over the light blue glaze is extremely simple and limited to a series of black dots located at the level of the maximum diameter. The neck and probably the edge of the base were once painted.

During the Middle Bronze Age (especially between the 18th and the 17th century B.C.), the production of faience objects spread throughout a large portion of the Near East, including Egypt, the Levant, Mesopotamia, the Iranian plateau, Anatolia and the Aegean world (Crete). On many Levantine sites (mostly in Ugarit, in modern-day Syria), archaeological excavations have uncovered several small vessels probably meant to store unguents or precious liquids. The technique of their manufacture and decoration were very similar to those used on this pyxis; in fact, the two closest parallels for this form come from Ugarit.

In addition, the decorative technique with a light blue background highlighted with patterns painted in black—imported from Egypt or inspired by Egyptian faience—has been used for a wide range of objects, including small vessels, statuettes that may represent deities, pendants in the shape of fruits or animals, and bottles and flasks that copy Egyptian vessels.

See also (9), (10), (11) and (12).

PROVENANCE

Acquired by M. Sleiman Aboutaam in Beirut in the beginning of 1980's; Gallery Antiquarium, New York.

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CALBET A. (ed.), *Faïences et matières vitreuses de l'Orient Ancien dans les collections du Musée du Louvre*, (Paris, 2005), pp. 43, nos. 81-82; pp. 61-62.





Cup (Pyxis?) with Three Feet

Near Eastern (Syria?), Middle Bronze Age (14th century B.C.)

Light blue and black faience

H : 6.4 cm – D : 4.6 cm (1:1)

Despite superficial wear under the feet, the vessel is complete and the very well preserved glaze partially retains its luster. The lid, which would have been similar to the one preserved with (8)

The body, whose profile has a slight ogival curve, is divided into two segments by two pasted edges: the upper cylindrical part with a simple rounded edge serves as a spout, while the v-shaped lower part is provided with three vertical stems that are applied from the central edge and turn into small feet. The lid was held in place by two pierced tenons visible inside the rim.

The decoration is limited to the glossy effect of the light blue glaze, simply highlighted with black lines drawn on the neck in a net pattern. It is worth noting the presence of a very similar form in Mesopotamia a few centuries later, as attested by two "Egyptian blue" frit examples: one from Babylonia and now in the Louvre, the other found in Assyria, and by a cup made of multicolored glass from Assur.

See also (8), (10), (11) and (12)

PROVENANCE

Acquired by M. Sleiman Aboutaam in Beirut in the beginning of 1980's; Gallery Antiquarium, New York.

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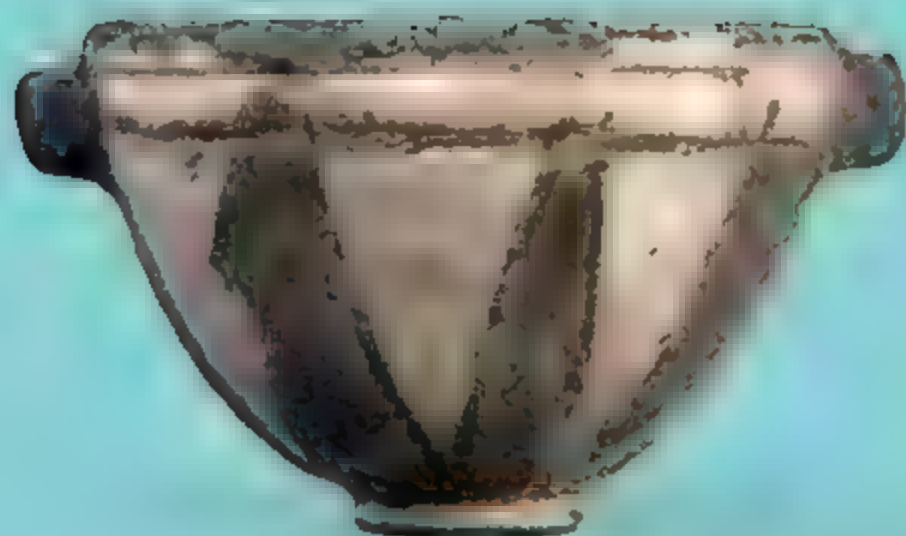
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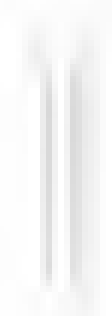
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HAULER A., *Die Gräber und Gräfte von Assur* (WVDOG 65) (Berlin, 1954), pl. 24e (glass).

WARTKE R.-B., *Glas im Altertum* (Berlin, 1982), pp. 6ff., fig. 2.





Hemispherical Cup

Near Eastern (Syria?), Middle Bronze Age (17th century B.C.)

White faience (?)

H: 4.7 cm (1.9)

This fragmentary vessel has been carefully repaired, and one of the handles has been restored. Traces of white glaze seem to be visible near the base and inside the cup. The lid is lost.

The shape of the vessel is simple. Despite its miniature size, the cup displays a sense of charm with its rather elegant harmonious proportions. The body, supported by a small circular base, is hemispherical and high. Two vertically pierced tenon-handles, which would have certainly served to attach the lid and allow the closing of the cup, are located on the outside, near the rim.

Large triangles roughly painted in black punctuate the surface of the body; their outlines are slightly incised. Two other incised lines highlight the upper cup, near the edge.

This piece – whose profile recalls, certainly by chance, that of the famous Protocorinthian skyphos which appeared about a millennium later – is to be classified like (8), (9), (11) and (12), and thus dates to the Middle Bronze Age. It was probably used to store an unguent or precious oil.

PROVENANCE

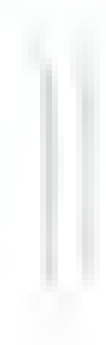
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Cup with a Duck Protome Handle

Near Eastern (Syria?), Middle Bronze Age (17th century B.C.)

Light-colored faience

L: 14.2 cm (l:l)

The vessel is in outstanding condition, although the glaze has almost entirely disappeared. Remaining on the outside are a few iridescent traces of light color, probably white or bluish. The inside of the small cup is painted in black, as are the rim and some details of the duck's head, emphasized by thick lines. On the inside, the glaze seems smooth near the edge, but forms somewhat thick lumps in the central part. This piece is composed of two elements: (a) The handle is rather short, with an easy hand-grip shape; it terminates in a plastic head of a duck, turned backward and placed on the handle, as if it were the body of the animal. The eye and neck are decorated in openwork. (b) The small cup is circular and low, semispherical in shape; its rim is adorned with incised lines. A stylized hand, looking like an extension of the handle (it is provided with six thin, elongated fingers!), is modeled in low relief under the cup, as if to carry it.

Like other cups and pyxides shown here ((10)–(13), (8) and (9)), this object is similar to Middle Bronze Age faience vessels from the Near East, as evidenced by the style and the manufacturing technique.

It has only two parallels dated to the same period: one from Ugarit, on the Syrian coast, the other (presumably unpublished) from Alalakh, a site also located in Syria, relatively near the coast (north of Ugarit, on the Orontes). Although the Egyptian influence is clear, no duck-headed faience cup is documented in Egyptian art, especially at this time. (In Egypt, duck-headed small cups with a similar structure were popular during the New Kingdom.)

The exact purpose of this small cup is unknown. Among the likely hypotheses are: an eye-shadow spoon, as in Egypt; a small ritual vessel, perhaps for funerary cults (the example from Ugarit was excavated in a tomb with rich and diversified furniture); a perfume burner.

PROVENANCE

Ex: R. Liechi (1934–2010) collection, Geneva, Switzerland; collected between the 1950's and the 1990's.

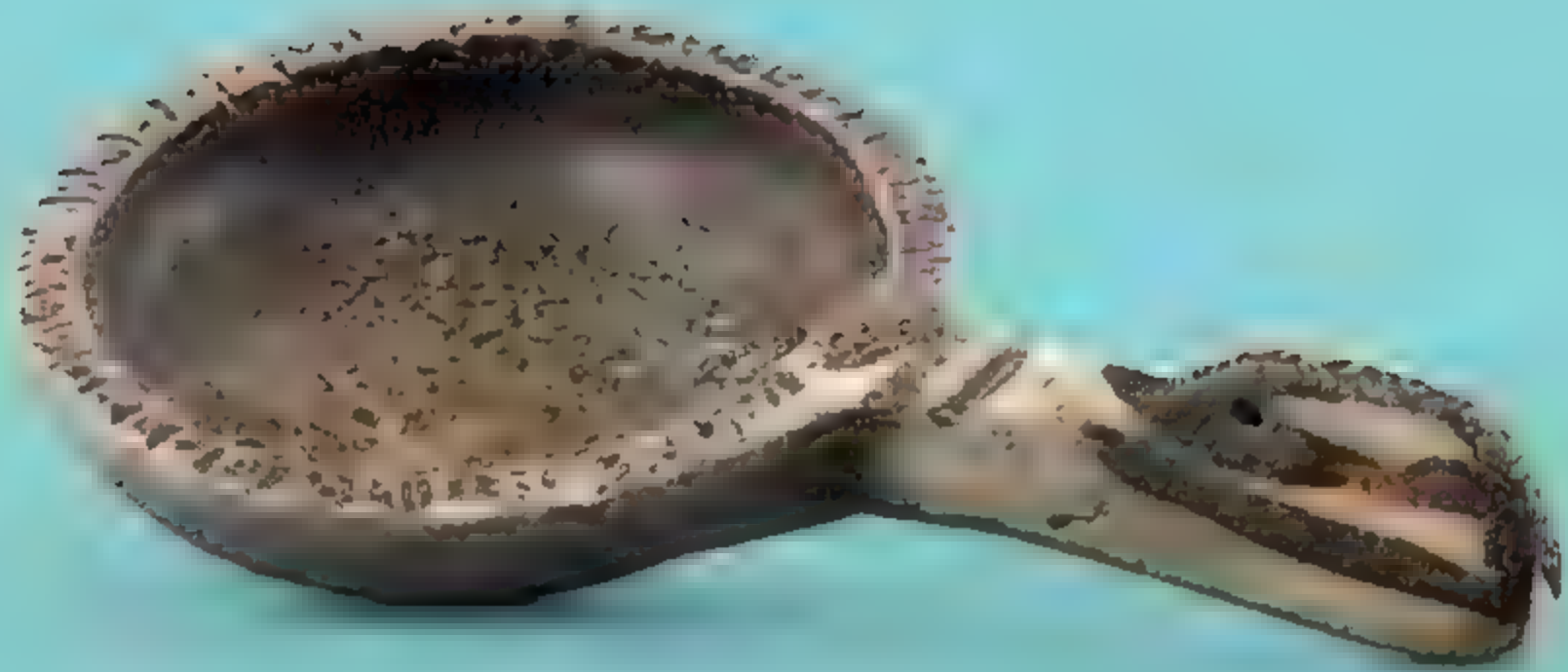
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Faience in Syria during the Middle Bronze Age.

CALBET A. (ed.), *Faïences de l'Antiquité. De l'Égypte à l'Iran* (Paris, 2005), pp. 43, nos. 81–82, pp. 61–62.







Feline-Headed Cup

Near Eastern (Syria?), Middle Bronze Age (17th–16th century B.C.)

Light blue faience

H: 6 cm (*enlarged*)

Except for minor cracks in the faience and the slightly erased glaze, the cup is in perfect condition.

This cup is not difficult to date, since it belongs, like (8), (9), (10) and (11), to the faience vessels of the Near Eastern Middle Bronze Age, as evidenced by the style but mainly by the manufacturing technique.

This very simply shaped vessel is almost cylindrical and terminates in a wide mouth with an angular rim; the lower end is closed and flat, providing good balance for the cup. The rim and the interior are painted in black.

The feline head, the lines indicating the mane probably characterize the animal as a lion, modeled in low relief on one side constitutes the special feature of the vessel and probably makes it unique. The shapes and details of the muzzle are rendered in a somewhat exaggerated, almost caricatural manner, which produced a somewhat naive style: large strokes of black paint for the mane, area around the eyes, and whiskers; incisions for the eyes and closed mouth; modeling for the nose and ears. The mouth, nostrils, and jowls are under the base. It is noteworthy that although this animal can probably be identified as a lion, the modeled head seen from below resembles a male face with grotesque features.

Unlike other pieces in the same series (8, 9, 10 and 11), this vessel had no lid: more than a perfume vase, it was therefore a cup meant to contain a small quantity of a precious drink or liquid. The use of a noble material such as faience and the presence of the feline make this a luxury item, used perhaps in a religious or funerary context (the lion is related, among others, to Ishtar, goddess of war and love).

Among rare parallels, this feline-headed cup can be associated with another cup, also devoid of handles and similar in size, found at Ebla (modern-day Syria) and dated to the same period. It is modeled in the form of a female face and probably represents a deity, perhaps Hathor or Ishtar.

PROVENANCE

Acquired by M. Sleiman Aboutaam in Beirut in the early 1980's.

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Cup with a female face from Ebla.

MATTHIAE P. et al., *Ebla, Alle origini della civiltà urbana* (Milano, 1995), pp. 457, 475, no. 370.

Cylinder Seal with a Figural Scene

Mitannian (Syria), 15th–14th century B.C.

Light green frit

H: 3 cm (*enlarged*)

Aside from minor cracks, the seal is intact and in excellent condition. The surface is smooth and glossy, and the rolled-out impression of the scene is perfectly clear. The cylinder is pierced lengthwise.

By the mid-second millennium B.C., faience—and more rarely frit—had become a widely used material in the manufacture of cylinder seals. These objects, which some scholars believe were used not only as seals but also as amulets, were mold-made.

Faience cylinder seals are among the best-known objects of Mitannian material culture. In the late 16th century B.C., the kingdoms of northern Syria were united in the state of Mitanni, a political entity probably ruled by an Indo-European aristocracy that managed to remain in power during the mid-centuries of the second millennium. Its territory ranged roughly from the Zagros Mountains to the Mediterranean Sea, between the Hittites to the north and the Egyptians to the south. Faience cylinder seals differ from their stone counterparts both in their material and in their unusual iconography. Their geographical distribution is important, too, since it includes a large part of the ancient Near East, as well as Cyprus, Mycenaean Greece, and the area around the Caspian Sea.

This seal shows a complex scene, one that appears frequently in Mitannian imagery. The center of the frieze is occupied by two standing figures. They face each other on opposite sides of a stylized tree whose branches are decorated with five globular fruits. Each man wears a long fringed mantle that leaves one shoulder uncovered and a semicircular head covering from which a bun and a braid protrude. The tree, the roots of which seem to be contained in a bag of soil, has not been thrust into the ground; this theme is generally interpreted as the ritual, and probably symbolic, planting of a bush.

Behind the two figures, the image is divided into two levels. In the upper part, two hybrid figures sit facing each other. It seems probable that these winged quadrupeds, each provided with a human head, are two sphinxes. Just below, separated by lines, is a row of five birds (waders) that appear to be standing on a spiraled frieze. As is often the case on these cylinder seals, the two monsters convey a peaceful attitude without any hostility toward either the men or the birds. Two horizontal lines delineate the composition (the lower line also indicates the ground).

Despite the strong stylization, the quality of the lines is precise and clear, and of the carved forms is quite comparable to that of the best seals of this type; the use of green-colored frit makes this piece even more singular.

PROVENANCE

Acquired by M. Sleiman Aboutzam in Beirut, from Nassib Sabbagh in 1980.

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Mask Representing a Female Face (Ishtar-Astarte?)

Near Eastern, 14th–13th century B.C.

Creamy white faience, bitumen

H: 6 cm (1:1)

The mask, probably mold-made, is complete and the surface still shows ample traces of glaze. The bitumen was inserted in a preformed hollow surface in the faience. The polychromy included the black bitumen – which served to highlight the eye area, the brows, and the neck area – and perhaps some elements painted in yellow or blue. Three metal rings (bronze or gold, adorned the ears of the mask (three holes are still visible in each ear).

The face, with its sharp and well-proportioned contours, represents a young person with idealized features: the absence of a beard and the holes for the ear ornaments seem to define the figure as female. The forms are full and well-modeled: her eyes are large and almond-shaped, two arched grooves join above the nose to indicate eyebrows, the ears are simple stylized thin bulges. The neck, whose outline is cut straight like the upper forehead, is adorned with a horizontal necklace of circular beads. The back of the piece is smooth and concave. See (15).

This mask belongs to type A of the classification established by J. Peltenburg, who attributes it to a Mesopotamian production center, the precise location of which is uncertain (Assyria, Babylonia, or Elam).

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Acquired in Beirut in 1985 by M. Sleiman Aboutaam.

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Mask Representing a Female Face (Ishtar-Astarte?)

Near Eastern, 14th–13th century B.C.

Creamy white faience, bitumen

H: 7.9 cm (1:1)

This mask quite remarkably retains both its original bitumen encrustations and its inlaid decorative elements (diamond necklace, eyebrows, eyes). Only the glaze is partially damaged. A circle clearly visible in the eyeballs indicates that the irises were once well marked (painted or given an extra layer of paste?).

The production technique and the materials used are the same as for figure (14). Typologically, this example differs from the latter primarily in its larger size and in the richer and more sophisticated composition: a thin horizontal diamond encircles the forehead of the young woman while her necklace has two rows of circular beads.

Despite the presence of elements that might be related to Peltenburg's type D (separated brows and size above the average—in particular) the overall shape, the thick relief and the extensive use of bitumen and inlaid decorations place this mask in the same group as the previous one (type A) together with a piece found at Tell al-Rimah (northern Iraq), it is one of the finest examples of the series.

Like figure (14), this object belongs to a well-attested group of masks that were widely distributed in a vast region ranging from Cyprus to Palestine, from Syria to Mesopotamia and as far as Iran. Their production appears to have been between the 14th and the 13th century B.C. In spite of the significant typological homogeneity, there are many stylistic differences which suggest several variants that may, in turn, indicate multiple production centers (Mesopotamia, Mari, Elam?).

The specific purpose of this type of mask remains unknown, but the available archaeological data seems to suggest multiple functions. The specimens from necropolises must have had funerary meaning, as amulets perhaps, while those found in sanctuaries could be interpreted as ex-votos (representing Ishtar-Astarte?). Some scholars regard the masks as ornaments that were affixed to wooden furniture, similar to the Neo-Assyrian ivories, or as elements to attach to "face vessels."

See also (14)

PROVENANCE

Acquired in Beirut in 1985 by M. Sleiman Aboutaam.

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Compartmentalized Pyxis

Near Eastern, Late Bronze Age (14th–13th century B.C.)

Multicolored faience

D: 15.5 cm (1:1)

Except for minor chips on the lip, this pyxis is beautifully preserved. Large yellow, cobalt blue and white traces of the partially erased paint are still visible on the surface.

The shape of the vessel is simple (low, rounded body without handles), but it features several elements that make this pyxis a special piece, such as the incised, ray-like lines on the outside, the serrated edge surmounted by the broad lip protruding to the inside, and mostly the seven compartments, arranged in the shape of a star, which regularly divide the inner bowl. Unlike other pyxides of this type, this example has no holes or tenons that would have served to attach a lid. The lid might have simply been placed on the flat lip. Like the lid of (51), it was probably disk-shaped and had a central gripping knob (perhaps with a slight projection on the lower part that would have allowed to stabilize the lid on the edge of the vessel).

The outer surface was entirely painted in dark blue, while the compartments on the inside surrounding the blue central compartment are alternately blue and yellow. On the lip, the preservation is less clear. It looks as if yellow, anguettes would have probably alternated with white and blue.

This piece belongs to a group of lid pyxides and polychromatic faience cups. These cups were decorated with gadroons with more or less deep incisions or "petals" in low relief that would certainly imitate a plant pattern such as a flower corolla. They were largely widespread in the region that ranges from Mesopotamia up to the Mediterranean (Cyprus). Among the closest parallels, there is an example that is virtually the same but without provenance, housed in a private collection in Berlin. There are also specimens with a gadrooned, globular or semi-spherical body, sometimes compartmentalized, which have been excavated in the necropolises of several Near Eastern sites (Ugarit in the Levant, Mari and Emar in Mesopotamia, Susa in Iran). These vessels can therefore be dated to the Late Bronze Age through the excavation data, between the 14th and the 13th century B.C.

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Kohl Pot with a Figural Scene

Egyptian, Dynasty 18 (reign of Thutmose III, 15th century B.C.)

Green-glazed steatite

H: 4 cm (*enlarged*)

The vessel is complete and in very good condition, but the lid is lost. The base and the neck are chipped. The glaze, which covered the entire surface, is largely preserved, mostly in the hollows and in the incisions; the beautiful dark green color retains its original luster.

The practice of lining the eyes with kohl was widely used in the Egyptian world and is known from the fifth and fourth millennia B.C. More than an aesthetic fashion, it was considered a hygienic necessity to protect and heal the eyes in a desert environment where the climate and the strong light easily caused eye ailments. Kohl was made by grinding minerals (malachite for green makeup and galena for black) and by mixing them with water or oil into a paste that was applied on the eyelids. Like perfumes and unguents, kohl also played an important role in religious and funerary rituals.

This form of kohl pot is well documented during the New Kingdom: the low cylindrical body sits on a circular base, the shoulder is rounded, and the neck narrow. The thin tubular inner profile was certainly intended for a very small quantity of a precious product. This example belongs to a small series of kohl vases that were composed of glazed steatite; among its closest parallels are examples in Boston, Berlin, and Paris.

All the decorative elements are in low relief, with many incised details. The composition is divided into two registers: one on the shoulder, which has triangular leaves alternating with chevrons, and another, a figural frieze, which occupies the entire body. In the latter scene, whose imagery is reminiscent of the ivory razor blades, six fabulous figures are represented, whose magical nature enabled them, according to ancient Egyptian belief, to ward off evil forces and evil creatures from the owner of the object and, at the same time, to reinforce the curative effects of the content of the vessel.

In order, can be identified: (a) a griffin (a hybrid creature with the body of a winged lion and the head of a raptor) on the back of which grows a human head; (b) two protomes of erect cobras, whose bodies, without tails, fit into one another; (c) Aha, a protective genius seen frontally, standing upright but with bent knees, holding two long snakes, often depicted on magic wands; his iconography and meaning are close to those of Bes; (d) Taweret, walking to the right and armed with knives; (e) a dwarf (?) seen in profile, heading to the right and holding a long rod; (f) an enigmatic figure seen in profile, standing upright on two legs, provided with a semi-spherical body, the head of a jackal, and a long, thin nose curving upward. Nothing separates one creature from another, but their arrangement nevertheless appears to follow a certain logic. The background of the scene is fully covered with an incised lattice pattern, on which the green glaze is still particularly well preserved.

PROVENANCE

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Bowl with Fish

New Kingdom, Dynasty 18 (16th–14th century B.C.)

Blue faience

D: 10.4 cm (1:1)

This faience plate highlighted with brown-black pigments is an example of a well-attested type in the New Kingdom. The interior of the vessel is decorated with two *Nile tilapia* (fish similar to perch, belonging to the family *Cichlidae*) holding lotus blossoms in their mouths. From an anatomical point of view, the fish are correctly depicted, with clearly delineated fins and scales. The blue color of the faience was likely meant to represent the waters of the Nile, and was supposed to imitate turquoise or lapis lazuli—both materials that carried a strong association with the goddess Hathor, who counted among her many epithets that of Lady of Turquoise. Hathor was closely linked to Horus, who was charged with maintaining order in the universe. She was also known as the Mistress of the West, a title that referred to her protective role of the region of the necropolises located along the west bank of the Nile.

The choice of the *tilapia nilotica* is no coincidence. This fish, often depicted on reliefs, adorned vessels as seen here and was also portrayed as a three-dimensional figurine. Nile tilapia are known to carry their eggs in their mouths; when the young hatch, they emerge from the mouth of the parent fish. This, to the Egyptian mind, was a potent sign of rebirth and regeneration.

Tilapia nilotica are not the only symbolic elements on this bowl. They, the lotus blooms, which opened and closed with the rising and setting sun, and the blue color of the faience all combine to produce a powerful message of fertility and rebirth that would have made this object a valuable grave good.

PROVENANCE

Ex-Sir William Matthew Flinders Petrie (1853–1942) collection, England, early 20th century

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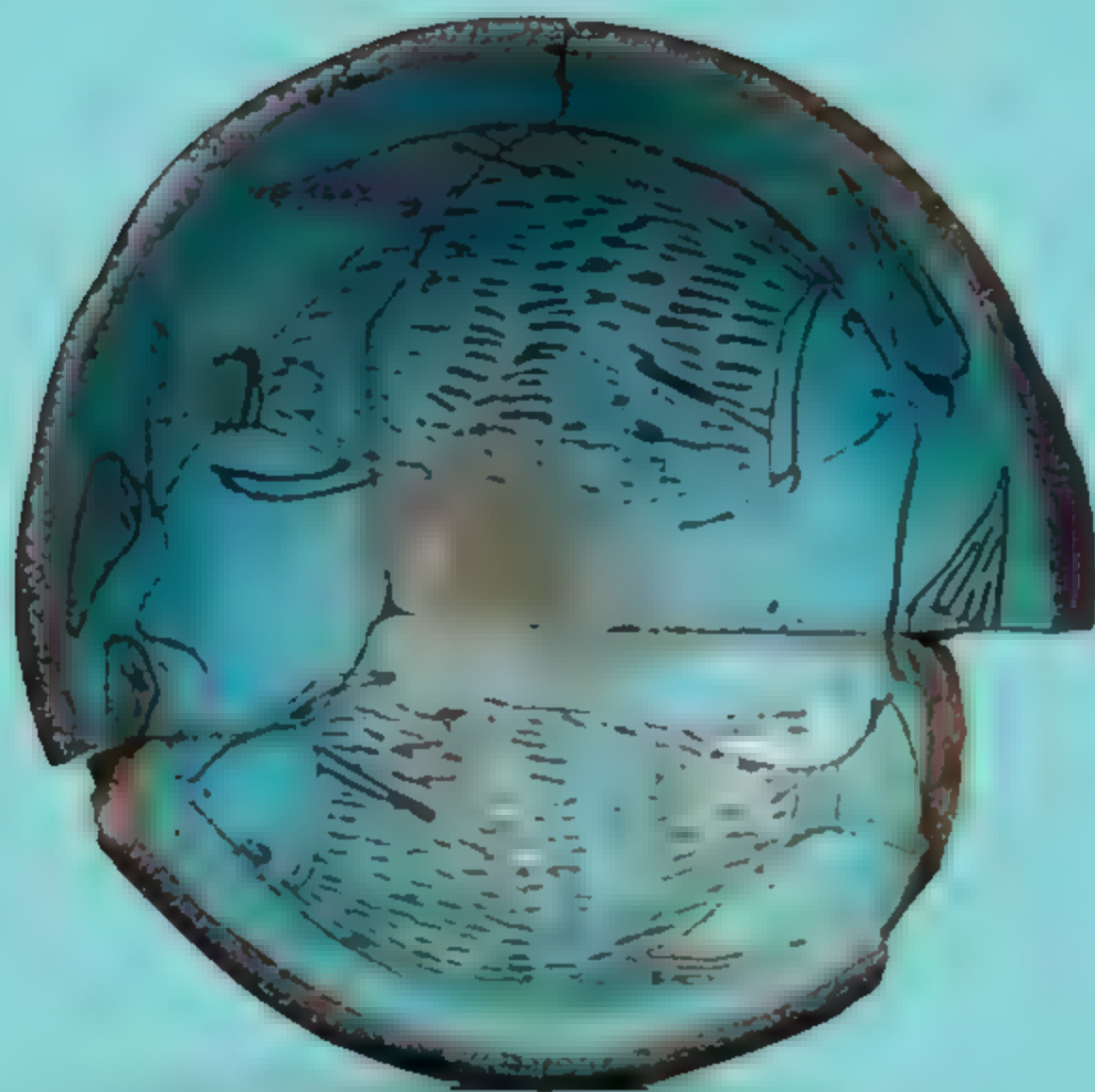
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Figurine of an Antelope with Tied Legs

Egyptian, Dynasty 18 (ca. 16th–14th century B.C.)

Light blue faience

L: 3.7 cm (*enlarged*)

The piece, which was probably molded, is complete and virtually intact; only the horns have been regilded. This beautiful two-dimensional figurine represents an antelope with tied legs. Its back is slightly rounded and without anatomical details. Slightly modeled shapes mark the abdomen and the muscles of the legs and neck, and glazed black lines demarcate and enrich the rendering of the horns, muzzle, ears, and tail, and highlight the presence of the laces around the hooves. The figurine, despite its miniature size, conveys a remarkable sense of realism and vitality.

The original purpose of this piece is still difficult to determine: it could have been an ornament decorating a precious object (such as a piece of finely crafted wood furniture), a funerary offering prepared for the sacrifice (in this case, the statuette would have played a role recalling that of the animals painted on tomb walls) or even, because of the reduced size, a figurine intended to be deposited in the foundations of a temple or of a royal funerary monument. Such deposits, composed of life-sized or miniaturized symbolic offerings (any kind of food offerings, amulets, and also daily objects such as work tools, etc.), were placed in shafts that were specifically made in particular areas of the new buildings (under the doors, at four corners, etc.) and directly depended on the pharaoh who was dedicating the building, a prophylactic meaning is currently attributed to these deposits. Their existence is attested from the Old Kingdom onward.

Gazelles, wild animals that live in the desert, were regularly hunted in ancient Egypt. In the New Kingdom (Dynasty 18), herds of wild animals, among which were antelopes, also lived in domesticated status at the royal court. In the mythological framework, gazelles were associated with Seth because of the natural environment in which they lived. Like the rest of the game in the desert, they came to symbolize hostile forces. But at the same time, in religious beliefs, the ability to survive in such a harsh environment endowed them with a regenerative power, enabling them to conquer death itself. This probably explains the existence of the large number of amulets, often molded in faience, that represent this bovid.

See also (20) and (24)

PROVENANCE

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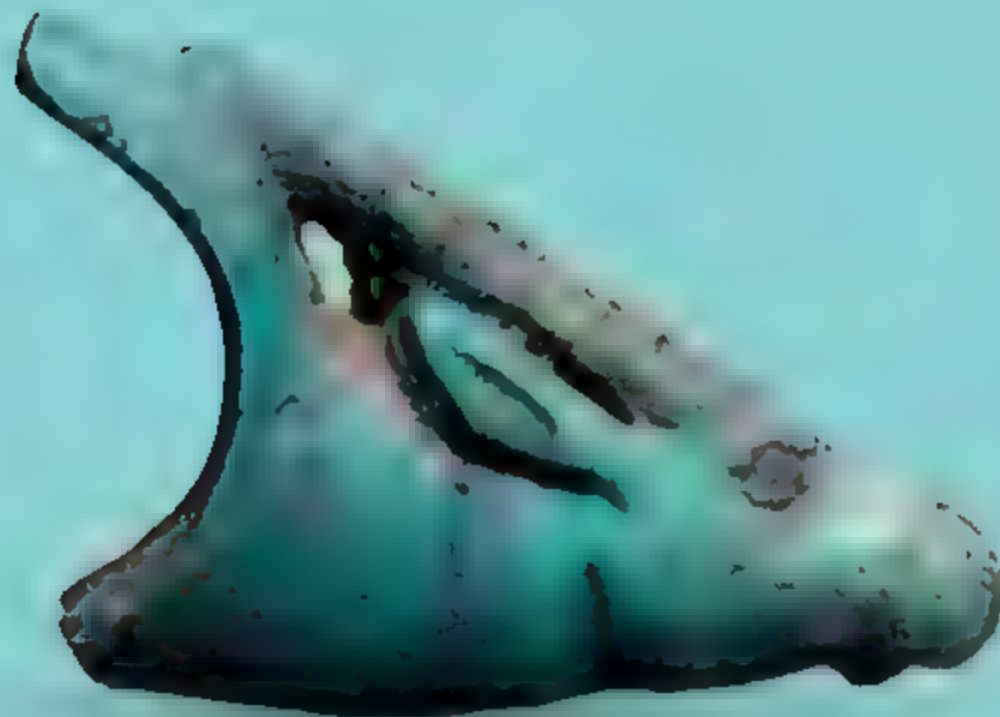
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Handle(?) in the Shape of an Antelope (Oryx) Protome

Egyptian, New Kingdom (Dynasty 18–19, ca. 16th–13th century B.C.)

Light blue faience

L: 6.8 cm (*enlarged*)

This handle, which was reassembled from a number of fragments, seems complete: the black traces that are clearly visible on the rounded edge are not decoration but rather look like the remains of material used as glue to attach the handle to a vessel now lost. The glaze (light blue, with black for the anatomical details) is in very good condition, but partially dirty.

This object represents an oryx protome with an elongated neck and the head pulled backward (the oryx is a species of large antelope with straight horns, well adapted to arid regions and common in the Egyptian desert during ancient times). In Egyptian art, this unnatural position is typical of tied-up animals about to be sacrificed (as in other examples, the back-arched neck would probably have been bound to the cords holding the antelope's legs).

Despite the thin material, the work is carefully rendered, mostly on the right side, that is, the main face of the piece, where the shapes of the head, the volumes of the muscles, and the anatomical details are highlighted in low relief. Many details are painted black (eyes, bridge of the horns, neck, nostril, mouth).

The exact use of this handle is enigmatic: the general form and the structure of the posterior extremities (seen in section, they are triangular) seem designed to fit into a circular or elliptical object that can easily be imagined as the bowl of a spoon, which would probably have been made of another material, such as wood. The handle does not appear to have close parallels. An idea of its ancient appearance may be obtained by comparing it to small ritual or cosmetic cups, especially those in the form of an antelope: their structure is similar since they are composed of a thin "protome-handle" (carved on both sides, however) and made in a single piece with a round or elliptical shallow bowl.

The presence of the antelope, a frequent sacrificial animal (during Dynasty 18, antelopes were domesticated and lived in the herds at the royal court), can be explained by its relationship to the god Seth, the master of evil, who lived like the oryx in the desert. After the defeat of Seth by Horus, the antelope appeared in art as subject to the son of Osiris.

See also (19) and (24)

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Bunch of Grapes

Egyptian, New Kingdom (Dynasty 18, 14th century B.C.)

Dark blue faience

H: 6.6 cm (l:l)

This hollow bunch of grapes was molded and pierced in the upper part (the hole was made after the drying process) so as to be fixed to or suspended from a wall.

Following the usual typology for similar objects, the bunch is very stylized. It has a perfectly symmetrical drop shape with small discs in low relief arranged irregularly to indicate the individual grapes. Only the dark blue color of the paste makes the pendant look more realistic. Bunches of grapes were used as decorative elements most frequently during the New Kingdom, and especially during the Amarna period. (In palatial iconography, grape bunches symbolized royalty.) They were mainly linked to ideas of regeneration and rebirth, but they were also a symbol of life since their shape suggests that of the human heart. Many similar pendants have been found in necropolises, as well as on monuments of civic and religious architecture. They were suspended from walls through the use of a metal rivet or a bronze ring, which is still preserved on some examples.

PROVENANCE

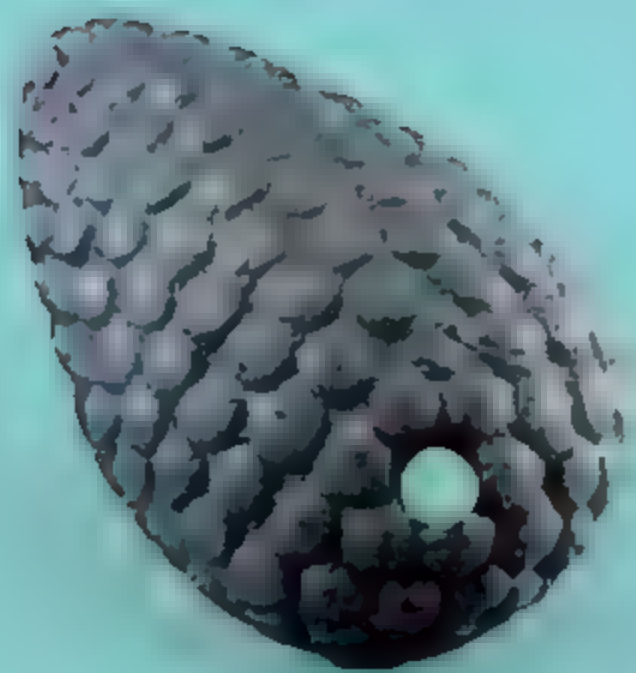
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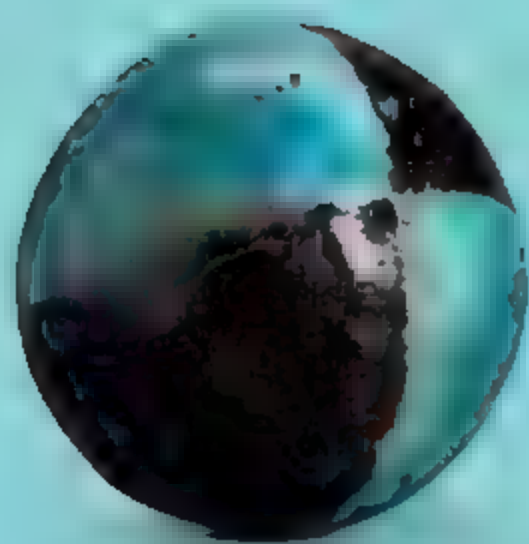
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Two-Colored Spherical Bead

Egyptian, New Kingdom (Dynasty 18, ca. 1600–1500 B.C.)

Blue and black faience

D: 4.6 cm (1:1)

Except for minor cracks, the bead is complete and retains its original luster and colors.

Much larger than average, this bead was molded in the shape of a sphere. It is hollow and was pierced lengthwise for suspension. Four longitudinal ribs alternately colored in blue and black divide the surface, recalling a modern basketball.

According to studies carried out on objects housed in the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire of Geneva, the potter used a burnable core: traces of which are still visible inside the broken beads; the core for the manufacture of these balls (beads) was made of vegetal fibers.

The symbolism and use of such beads are unclear, although a connection with the goddess Hathor seems well established since many examples offered as ex-votos were excavated in sanctuaries of the goddess. The existence of specimens containing seeds (Louvre) might confirm this hypothesis, especially if one relates them to the sistrums, which produced a rattling sound and were shaken during rites honoring Hathor. Other spherical beads of this type appear in tombs of the same period.

See also (23).

PROVENANCE

Ex: Tackholm collection, Sweden, early 20th century

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Two-colored Spherical Bead

Egyptian, New Kingdom (Dynasty 18, ca. 16th–14th century B.C.)

Blue and black faience

D: 4.5 cm (1:1)

The bead, which still retains the original luster of the faience, is slightly chipped, but complete and in a remarkable state of preservation. Like (22), this spherical bead is large. Its surface is decorated with eight sections painted alternately in black and blue.

See also (22).

PROVENANCE

Ex: French private collection.

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Ornament(?) Representing a Seated Antelope

Egyptian, New Kingdom (Dynasty 18, ca. 16th–13th century B.C.)

Light green faience

Dim: 3.3 × 5.8 cm (*enlarged*)

The piece has been repaired but it is complete and in excellent condition. Some anatomical details are highlighted in light blue (hooves, horns, ears, tail, ins), black (eyes), or red (tongue). Probably made using a mold, the posterior part is flat and smooth.

This figurine is not only characterized by its outstanding artistic quality, but also by the choice of a very special moment: almost intimate in the life of an animal and by a realistic, lively rendering. The animal, quietly seated on its legs, it raises nevertheless the right fore- and hind legs, thus creating two openwork spaces that might have served to attach the ornament to its support. It is busy washing itself: it turns its head back and cleans its neck by smoothing its fur with the tongue. The scene unfolds on a long, thin, straight pedestal. A small masterpiece of Egyptian wildlife art: the piece employs a technique that is a perfect mix of slightly modeled (shoulders, barely bulging abdomen, thighs), incised (details of the legs, eye), and painted elements.

It is no longer possible to determine the exact purpose of the piece. The flat, regular shape of the posterior part and the carefully carved edges suggest use as a decorative element – perhaps belonging to a group of several pieces – that would have enriched, with a fastening system (tenon, preformed hollow surface, etc.), a precious support, such as furniture or a sarcophagus, but whose precise nature remains unknown.

In the New Kingdom, especially during Dynasty 18, Egyptian craftsmen began to vary their faience production – perhaps in response to the competition of imported glass objects, first from the Near East – by expanding the palette: green, red, yellow, and dark blue, as well as lighter or darker shades resulting from the mixing, were obtained through the use of new oxides applied to the surface or placed on the object that had to be decorated in the faience inlay technique.

The use of polychromy characterizes the production of various objects: figurines, sometimes made of white or very light faience (this piece, for example), amulets, and jewels (the technique allowed artisans to imitate the colors of precious stones). The most important use of polychromy, however, was for painted or inlaid plaques (types of tiles) that, once assembled on the walls of the large palaces, had an architectural function, enabling the creation of large compositions that resembled wall frescoes – both techniques could also be combined by incorporating faience elements into actual frescoes. Judging from the preserved pieces, these compositions most often depicted Nilotic scenes. Many small plaques, or fragments of plaques, of this type come from the city of Amarna, the capital of Akhenaten.

See also (19) and (20)

PROVENANCE

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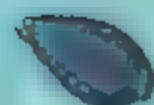
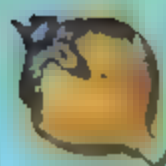
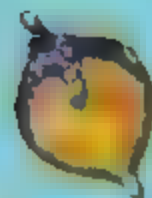
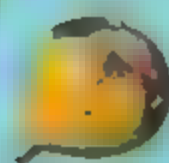
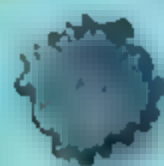
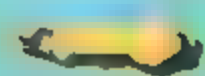
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Group of Pendants

Egyptian, New Kingdom (Amarna Period, 1353–1320 B.C.)

Multicolored faience (yellow, blue, dark blue)

Dim. (largest bead): 1.7 cm (1:1)

Aside from a few pieces whose surface is slightly worn, the beads are intact and still largely retain their original luster.

The group is composed of eighteen necklace beads, including eleven yellow circular fruits with blue feet and leaves (the fruit of the Mandragora or, according to others, of the *Mimusops*, which Egyptians believed to have an aphrodisiac power), three wine grapes (see (21)), a *nefer's qn* (a sign of good omen that involves the concepts of "goodness" and "beauty" a bird (a swallow?), an amulet composed of four *udjat*-eyes (see (69) and (80)), and a flared bead with vertical grooves, reminiscent of a flower.

The fruits of the Mandragora were made of two different pastes, a yellow one and a blue for the foot and the leaves, which were placed before firing in a slightly hollowed area. The suspension rings were also modeled separately and assembled later.

Mounted in several rows, these beads would have constituted large necklaces that were particularly popular in the New Kingdom, as evidenced, for instance, by contemporary representations on statues, frescoes, and *ushabtis*.

The Amarna period, marked by many changes, must have been a great challenge for contemporary artists, who had to adapt in very little time to the directives imposed by the new rulers. Art in this period is characterized both by the realistic, sometimes grotesque, representation of all figures (including those of the royal family) and by the varied representations of nature that convey a sense of decay and naturalism, rich in elements and colors which, as admirably demonstrated by these small faience pendants, still retain their bright shine (see also (24)).

See also (26), (27) and (28)

PROVENANCE

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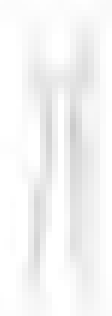
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Group of Pendants

Egyptian, New Kingdom (Amarna period, 1353–1325 B.C.)

Multicolored faience (blue, red, turquoise, light green)

D (largest bead): 2.3 cm (1:1)

The beads are intact and retain their original luster.

The group is composed of fifteen small-sized necklace beads, including nine palmettes (or lilies) of different sizes and colors (green, blue, and turquoise blue), two flower beads with vertical grooves, two dates (a red one and a blue), a small red pomegranate, and an object in the shape of a leaf, yet undetermined.

On amarnian faiences see (24).

See also (25), (27) and (28).

PROVENANCE

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Necklace with Multicolored Beads

Egyptian, New Kingdom (Amarna period, 1353–1370 B.C.)

Multicolored faience (yellow, blue, white, green)

Dim. (largest bead): 3.5 cm (1:1)

As currently assembled, this necklace has thirteen beads representing white, yellow, and blue lotus petals alternating with fourteen semi-spherical yellow Mandragora fruits, each provided with a small blue foot. Each element is separated by a long cylindrical green bead that is mounted horizontally.

Egyptians attributed an aphrodisiac power to the lotus, as well as to the fruit of the Mandragora.

On amarnian faiences see (24)

See also (25), (26) and (28)

PROVENANCE

Acquired by a couple of American collectors in the early 20th century.

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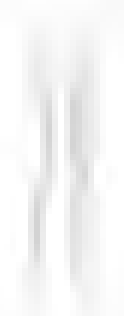
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Necklace with Multicolored Beads

Egyptian, New Kingdom (Amarna period, 1353–1370 B.C.)

Multicolored faience (blue, green, turquoise)

D (largest bead): 2.7 cm (1:1)

Like (17) the beads of this group are currently assembled and form a necklace of green palm leaves alternating with wheat flowers, some are sky blue, others are green with a dark blue tuft. The wheat flowers were seen as a symbol of regeneration since they close at night and reopen the next morning. Long cylindrical green beads are inserted between each element of the necklace as separation ornaments.

On amarnian faiences see (24)

See also (25), (26) and (27)

PROVENANCE

Acquired by a couple of American collectors in the early 20th century

EXHIBITED

New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, between 1920 and 1945, Hall of Egyptian Jewelry, and Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, between 1945 and 1967

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Amulet in the Form of a Frog

Egyptian, New Kingdom (13th–11th century B.C.)

Grayish blue faience

H: 1.9 cm (*enlarged*)

Made of a colored paste less bright than usual (grayish blue in the core, with traces of glaze of the same shade), this amulet represents a frog in a seemingly resting position, with the front legs slightly curved to each side and the gaze directed upward; the hind legs folded under the body are poised as if ready to spring forward. Three vertical lines on the back, perhaps imitating the details of a frog's skin, and the circular eyes were rendered using a light green paste that was inserted into the linear hollows of the surface before the firing process.

The frog population on the banks of the Nile was huge, which explains the popularity of the frog in the iconography of ancient Egyptian art. Carved or modeled from various materials – for example, stone, faience, ivory, or even metal – frog figurines served primarily as amulets. Their symbolism was based on the theme of water, a vital element in a desert environment like the Nilotic region. Perhaps even more important was the theme of the perpetual renewal of life, which they exemplify because of their high fertility, the various metamorphoses they undergo to they reach adulthood (egg, tadpole, frog), and their ability to adapt to both aquatic and terrestrial life.

Heket, the Egyptian goddess who presided over all births and protected women in childbirth, was represented in the form of a frog-headed woman.

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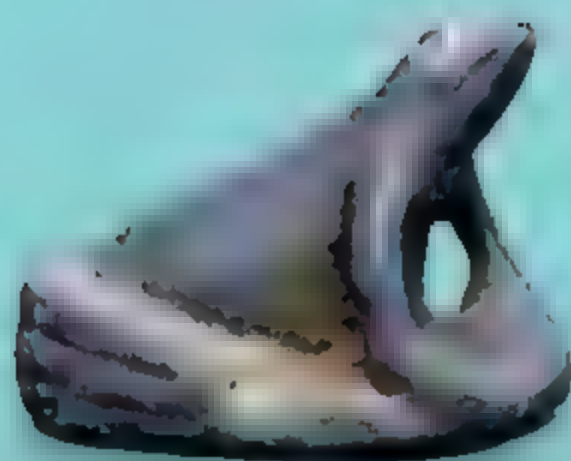
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Ring with a Lotus Flower and a Scarab

Egyptian, New Kingdom (Dynasty 19–20, ca. 13th–11th century B.C.)

Bright blue faience

H: 2.8 cm (*enlarged*)

The ring has been reassembled, but it is complete and in an excellent state of preservation. The surface is slightly worn. A label bearing no. 13884 is glued under the scarab.

The ring is comprised of two elements: (a) The ring itself represents two lotus flowers, partially decorated in openwork and connected by a single stem. The stem shows incised lines that recall the decorations of a gold snail chain. The triangular flowers are furrowed with engraved lines indicating the petals. (b) The elliptical flat area (supported by the corolla of the flowers) supports a miniature statuette of a scarab, which, despite its reduced size, is rendered in a very realistic and accurate manner.

Rings adorned with this motif are rather rare; the more usual designs being the *udjat*-eye, the *ankh* or the *nefer* sign, some protective deities (e.g., Taweret, Bes, Thoth), or even on occasion the royal cartouches.

Although they are often of high quality, which demonstrates the artistic skills of Egyptian potters, such rings were made in large numbers; the bezel was pressed in a clay mold (numerous examples have been recovered from many sites) before being attached to the ring and then fired.

In addition to the attested function as jewelry and, despite the fragility, faience rings could serve as seals and therefore as witness to the social position of the owner. A ring whose flat area was decorated with a magical symbol had the value of a talisman in addition and protected the person who wore it (the scarab, for example, was a symbol of becoming and of rebirth). In the funerary sphere, it has been noticed that rings of this type were often worn on the left annular of mummies.

The golden age of faience jewelry (rings, necklaces) follows from the multiplication of colors obtained by introducing new coloring oxides, used by potters from the New Kingdom onward.

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Vessel (?) in the Shape of a Pomegranate

Egyptian, New Kingdom (Dynasty 18 (?), ca. 15th–13th century B.C. or Late Period (Persian Period, Late 6th–4th century B.C.)

Light blue frit

H: 4.9 cm (*enlarged*)

The vessel is complete only a fragment of the calyx is lost. The surface is slightly worn, but the lower part of the fruit still retains large traces of shiny glaze. The rounded area is painted in light green, the calyx in white.

This object represents a pomegranate smaller than life size. The fruit is somewhat spherical, but furrowed with five vertical edges that form as many flat faces. Seen from above, the outline of the vessel forms a hexagon. One end is rounded and serves as a bottom for the vessel to stand, while the other is cut into seven calyx tips (it is noteworthy that when pomegranates are ripe, before the harvest, their calyx is turned toward the ground, the rounded part being attached to the branch of the pomegranate tree).

Pomegranates (the trees are native to Anatolia and Iran) appeared in Egypt in the early New Kingdom, probably imported from Syria and Palestine. Their presence in the Nile valley is attested by both fruits and seeds, mostly found in tombs, and by their appearance in funerary paintings or on reliefs. Egyptian artists have also created many three-dimensional representations of pomegranates, like our example, made of faience or frit, of glass, wood, or terracotta, but also of precious metal (e.g., the silver fruit from the tomb of Tutankhamun). The small size and thin neck of these vessels suggest that they served to store very precious liquids—perhaps a perfume, or a small quantity of pomegranate juice or wine to be offered to a deity.

In addition to their medicinal uses (as a vermifuge, a disinfectant, and a gastro-enteric medicine), pomegranate seeds were appreciated for their sweetness and their refreshing juice, which was also probably used to enrich and flavor the taste of other beverages. Furthermore, as was the case in the rest of the Mediterranean world, the high number of seeds in each fruit might have conveyed a symbolic meaning in relation to fertility and rebirth (the pomegranate is one of the attributes par excellence of Astarte and Aphrodite/Venus). In addition, the fruits could be preserved for long periods of time, allowing them to be consumed over several months. Pomegranate juice would have also been used as a dye for textiles.

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Two Small Cylindrical Vessels Bearing the Name of Seti I

Egyptian, Dynasty 19 (ca. 13th century B.C.)

Dark blue faience

H: 5.6 cm - 5.2 cm (*enlarged*)

Both vessels are complete, but the dark blue glaze is largely damaged. Some traces of glaze remain, however, intense and bright, inside and near the base of the vessels.

These cups are very similar in shape: the base is slightly flared, the body is cylindrical with a straight, slightly inclined wall and a rounded, everted rim.

The pale yellow faience inscriptionment on Pharaoh Seti I "Lord of the two Lands, Men-Maat-Re (Seti I) beloved of Osiris the great god" appears on the smaller vessel and "Men-Maat-Re (Seti I) beloved of Sokar" on the larger one. Before the firing process, the potter would have inserted the colored paste for the inscriptions into the hollows specially prepared on the surface to be decorated.

The production of small cylindrical cups has a long tradition in the repertoire of Egyptian forms: in stone (Predynastic period and Old Kingdom), terra-cotta, and later, as here, faience and glass vessels.

Bearing the name of Seti I, these two cups certainly come from a place of worship associated with the pharaoh, perhaps from Abydos, the sacred city in which Seti I had built a chapel to Osiris and another one to Sokar. Since the form and color of these ritual vessels were related to their contents, the blue color might have characterized vessels holding water or natron salt.

Usually these small cups, which were provided with a lid, would have contained perfumed oils and unguents for cosmetic or medicinal use. As is explained in the "Ritual of Embalming" an ancient papyrus now in the Louvre, these products were also very important in the ritual sphere, since they were regularly used during mummification. At that time, this cup form was more common in the "traditional" light blue faience with black inscriptions.

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Ushabti with the Name of Pharaoh Seti I

Egyptian, Dynasty 19 (early 13th century B.C.)

Dark blue and black faience

H: 8 cm (1:1)

Only the central part of the statuette, between the neck and the knees, is preserved. The technical qualities of this piece are exceptional and certainly worthy of the most beautiful faience of the New Kingdom. The paste, bluish gray inside, is fine textured and compact; the glaze, slightly chipped in places, is a magnificent intense blue color, with inscriptions traced in black.

This *ushabti* belongs to a set of more than 700 similar objects that were deposited in the tomb of Seti I, found at Thebes in the valley of the Kings, in 1817 by G. B. Belzoni. This very large number of *ushabtis* suggests that this pharaoh had two servants per day at his disposal instead of a single one (the canonical number of one for each day of the year was 365). The statuettes, unequal in quality, size and materials (wood, glazed stoneware, faience), were dispersed soon after their excavation and are now housed in countless public and private collections around the world. According to accounts contemporary with the opening of the tomb, several wooden figurines were burnt to light the way for the first visitors.

Rather undervalued compared to those of Tutankhamun, but more abundant, the funerary statuettes of the man who was one of the greatest kings of the New Kingdom can be classified into a sort of hierarchy, from the highest quality faience pieces to those made of glazed stone or of wood, lower in quality. The most beautiful faience pieces, which are real masterpieces, reach thirty centimeters in height and are among the largest known *ushabtis*: they represent the king wearing the nemes surmounted by the *uraeus*.

The present piece, whose full height was likely between 15 and 18 centimeters, probably is among the most beautiful medium-sized pieces. Its typology does not differ from the usual standards: the figure is wrapped in a shroud from which only the hands protrude, and, as a way, he is provided with agricultural tools, which are simply painted, while the seed sack is suspended from the shoulders and hangs down the back. Despite the large number of statuettes in the original cache, complete figurines are extremely rare.

The preserved text (two lines encircling the statuette) contains several of the pharaoh's titles (*"Enlightened is Osiris, King [of Upper Egypt], he is Men-Maat-Re, justified"*) and an excerpt from chapter 6b of the Book of the Dead. In general, the text indicates a rather redundant use of language.

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Pectoral with a Military Scene Representing Ramses II

Egyptian, Dynasty 19 (reign of Ramses II, 13th century B.C.)

Green-glazed steatite

Dim: 7 × 7 cm (*enlarged*)

Despite minor sand deposits, the piece is complete and in remarkable condition: the surface partially retains small greenish gray traces of glaze, mostly on the upper right corner (edge).

This square pectoral was carved from a soft stone, decorated on the obverse with a complex scene in very high relief, with figures that almost appear keen to leave the very thin background. The reverse bears a long inscription divided into seven columns with carefully incised hieroglyphic signs. The vertical sides show seven regular, circular holes that served to attach the object to its ancient support.

The image on the obverse is a remarkable concentration of information that, as is often the case in Egyptian monuments, uses several complementary means of expression, including iconography and hieroglyphic texts, as well as numerous semagrams that are carved into the background and have both descriptive and decorative functions.

The scene represents the ritual killing of the enemy here an Asian, by a man of imposing size and youthful appearance that the inscriptions identify as Ramses II: the king wears the red crown of Lower Egypt, indicating that the scene takes place near the northern borders of the land. Stripped to the waist, he wears only a *shendyt* (a kilt with the tail of a feline), a large necklace, and a false beard. In his raised right hand, he holds a sort of scimitar (a *khepesh*, the ancient Egyptian word for "thigh"), which he is about to use to hit his enemy. In his left hand, the pharaoh clutches the hair of his victim so that he cannot escape. The captive, already on the ground with his knees bent, raises the right arm to implore the grace of the king: a small lion – a symbol of power that often accompanies images of sovereigns in this period – bites the heel of the captive.

The various signs that complete the scene can be read: behind the pharaoh, near the was scepter which indicates his power, "the perfect god, lord of the two lands"; between the arm and the crown "endowed with life"; in front of the sovereign, the cartouche indicating his name (User-Maat-Re Setep-en-Re) and the signs "like Re, eternally"; between the pharaoh and the captive "action of bringing down" followed by the *uraeus* with the solar disk. The meanings of the inscriptions in the small columns of the upper right corner are less certain but could signify, "beside us is the king, powerful with his *khepesh*, we grab (?) any enemy out."

The inscription on the reverse side is of exceptional historical interest because of its length and especially because it is probably a unique version echoing the inscription incised on the south wall of the Great Temple of Ramses II at Abu Simbel. In the center of the temple wall, the monarch is represented in his chariot (hence the mention of the chariot in the text of this pectoral, even if Ramses II is represented standing upright, and is about to attack a fortified Syrian city. The text varies from the monumental version, and the order of the sentences is different: it is a recurring paradox of Egyptian art that it gives great importance to the text accompanying a figural work but, most of the time, does not respect a literal copy. The translation of the hieroglyphic signs (that are partially legible or uncertain), reads: "The king leaving, master of the *khepesh*, protector of his army, he is stable on his chariot, the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, son of Amon, of the palace (?) strong like crowds, a powerful fighter who knows how to use his hand, like the master of Thebes, powerful like hundreds of thousands, who breaks the crowds, who tramples the rebels in their valleys like locusts, you destroy there the ones who came to you."

The end of the text seems to make even more sense here than in the variant from Abu Simbel.



It is worth questioning the symbolic value of this pectoral, very different from the usual type characterized by the presence of the scarab, a sign of rebirth. The holes on the sides prove that it was mounted on an object made of several elements, perhaps in the form of a naos. Taking into account the specific historical episode referred to in the text, it is likely that this pectoral was a military decoration, probably given as a souvenir to an officer who would have actively participated in a campaign of war in the north. The officer would have then used it as an element of his funerary "adornment."

This object is therefore absolutely extraordinary – even for this period, among the best known of Egyptian history – for its artistic and technical qualities, as well as for the historical information it provides, which repeats and confirms a text carved on one of the greatest and most famous architectural monuments of ancient Egypt.

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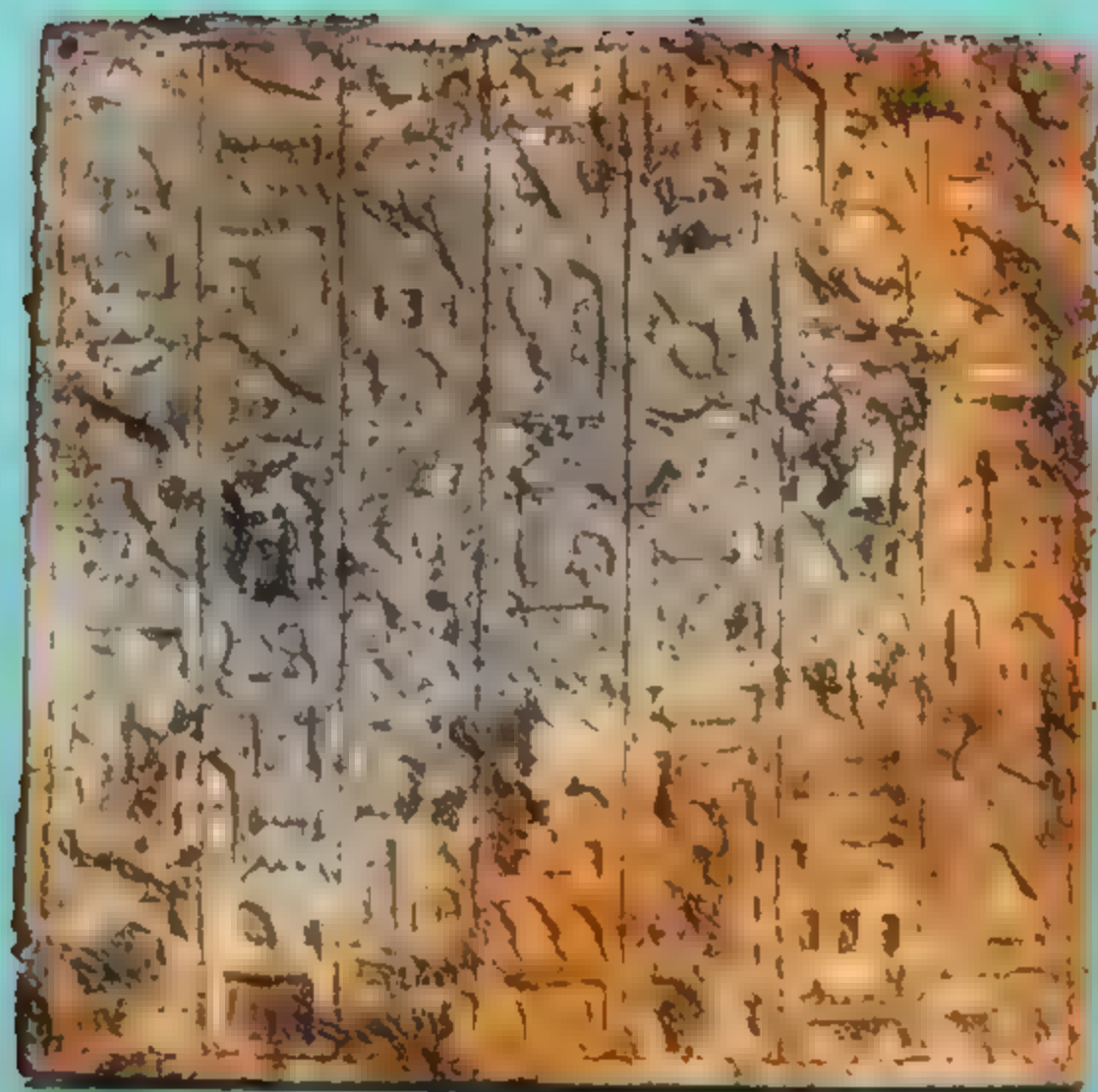
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Group of 25 Scarabs-Amulets in the Shape of Animals

Egyptian, New Kingdom (second half of the 2nd millennium B.C.)

These amulets, which were gathered in Alexandria in the 1950s before becoming part of a German private collection, are presented here in toto, arranged by the subject carved on the back. Some of them were modeled in faience, others carved in glazed stone. All were pierced lengthwise.

The shape of the scarab-amulet, often small in size, is its distinctive feature, although several examples depict animals such as rabbits or frogs in a sort of bestiary of Egyptian civilization. The animal represented on the back of the amulet symbolizes its essential nature and impact, indicating its magical value. The flat area, however, bears an inscription, sometimes enigmatic or incomprehensible, which reveals the usual purpose of the object: it might be a seal or a commemorative piece (like the large scarabs of Amenhotep IV) or a prophylactic.

A) Scarab

Among the animal-shaped amulets, scarabs are by far the most common subject. Their meaning is associated with ideas of becoming, rebirth, and resurrection of the sun and, by analogy, of the deceased in the afterlife.

1. Greenish blue faience

L: 1.5 cm (*enlarged*)

On the flat area, the god Amun wears his double-feathered headgear and holds two solar deities by the hands; the one on the right may be falcon-headed.

2. Dark blue glazed whitish stone

L: 1.4 cm (*enlarged*)

The surface of the stone shows cracks. The inscription on the flat area is composed of several hieroglyphic signs and translates "with an ancestor god", or with more difficulty, "give, ancestor god".

3. Dark green glazed yellowish stone

L: 1.1 cm (*enlarged*)

The main sign represents a lion-headed deity holding a was scepter. The inscription can be translated as "the lion, master of power".

4. Blue-green faience

L: 1.5 cm (*enlarged*)

The inscription might refer to the central chapter of the offering of Maat in the daily worship: "Every day Maat".

5. Dark blue glazed yellowish stone

L (with golden rim): 2.3 cm (*enlarged*)

The amulet is mounted on a golden rim (modern?). The back represents two winged scarabs, one is pushing the sun. On the flat area, there are two *nefer* signs framed by a long stem forming volutes. This piece could be of Asiatic origin (Hyksos?).

6. Greenish blue glazed yellowish stone

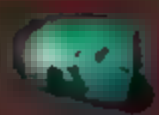
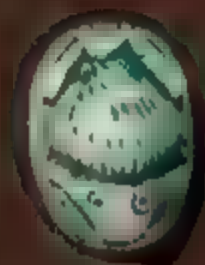
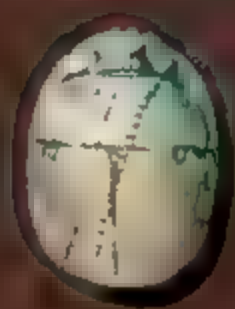
L: 1.6 cm (*enlarged*)

On the flat area, the symmetrical and reversed composition simply shows a choice of animals: a fish, a frog, and an insect.

7. Light blue glazed stone

L: 1.9 cm (*enlarged*)

The body of the scarab is very rounded and almost without details; it might be incomplete. A small fragment or meta-tenon protrudes from the front part. The inscription, accompanied by the sign of life and by two crowns of Lower Egypt, reads: "make the soul (the Ka) twice perfect". It could also be an Asiatic piece.



B) Hare

The hare represents the verb "to be" and is therefore a symbol of the eternal being. Linked to the goddess Unut, it is also related to the concepts of fecundity and fertility.

8. Light blue faience

L: 1.3 cm (*enlarged*)

The flat area depicts a widespread pattern, composed of two lotus buds, the subject, which appears on many amulets of this group, is probably related to the idea of joy and pleasure.

9. Light blue glazed whitish stone

L: 1.4 cm (*enlarged*)

The back represents a hare with its body stretched forward, as if ready to pounce. The inscription on the flat area resembles that of nos. G25 and C12. This is an amulet with the name of Thutmose III, referred to as "the rejuvenated god".

C) Duck

With head and neck turned back and placed on its back, the duck represents the root of the verb "to be afraid" and symbolizes the fear of the gods.

10. Dark green glazed beige stone

L: 1.4 cm (*enlarged*)

The flat area contains signs, surrounded by a cartouche, which seems to read: "Oh Horus, the master, son of Isis (?)"

11. Green faience (?)

L: 1.2 cm (*enlarged*)

The inscription on the flat area, surrounded by a cartouche containing many signs (basket, white and red crown, a falcon, sun, winged solar disk of Behedet), is enigmatic, unless it is to be interpreted as "Horus of Behedet, every day and every night in Upper and Lower Egypt".

12. Dark green faience or glazed stone

L: 1.2 cm (*enlarged*)

The inscription gives the name of Thutmose III (Men-kheper-Re). Here the wings of the sign representing the scarab in the name of the king are transformed into cobras (see B9 and G25).

D) Cat

This animal is the pacified form of dangerous deities, in particular Sekhmet, the lioness, as a deity, the cat is known as Bastet.

13. Blue faience (?)

L: 1.3 cm (*enlarged*)

The statuette of the cat is stylized, but the animal looks lively and ready to pounce. The incised motif on the flat area shows an open lotus flower surrounded by two folded buds, the theme of the lotus is related to the idea of joy and celebration.

14. Dark blue glazed whitish stone

L: 1.3 cm (*enlarged*)

The back represents a seated cat with a janiform head. On the flat area, the motif is similar to the previous example but more stylized.

15. Dark blue faience

L: 0.9 cm (*enlarged*)

Probably because of the tiny size of the statuette, the shapes are slightly rigid and stylized. The inscription on the flat area can be read as: "Amunet, the mistress" or "Amon, master of the two lands".

E) Man lying face down with his legs bent up

This is a limited series of scarabs-amulets, usually small in size, whose meaning remains unclear. According to Newberry, this iconography imitates the seals of the Middle Kingdom that represent a statuette of a man sitting cross-legged, wearing a wig, with his hands on the knees, but the representation would be flat, like a relief, giving it the curved silhouette of a scarab at the same time.

16. Light blue faience

L: 0.9 cm (*enlarged*)

The flat area is covered with a floral pattern composed of a central flower with open petals (the *un* symbol, verb "to be"?) and surrounded by lotus buds.

17. Light blue faience (?)

L: 1.1 cm (*enlarged*)

The reclining figure is rendered in great detail. The text incised on the flat area reads "Amun-Re, the master" and is surrounded by a long stem with a lotus bud.

F) Frog

A representation of the goddess Heket, protector of births, the frog symbolized creation and eternity but also fertility.

18. Dark green glazed yellowish stone

L: 1.6 cm (*enlarged*)

The animal represented on the back is strange, but seems closer to the form of the frog (legs, shape of the head) than the scarab, of which it imitates only the rounded silhouette. The text of the inscription reads "Sobek, son of Re". Depending on which mythological version and which era one considers, Sobek, the crocodile god, is either a grandson or a son of Re (especially in the first millennium).

19. Light blue faience

L: 0.7 cm (*enlarged*)

The figure in relief on the back is difficult to identify. It is more likely a frog than a man lying on his stomach (see E 16–17). The inscription also has enigmatic features, although it could read "Amon, master of the two lands" in a partially distorted form.

20. Light blue faience or stone

L: 0.5 cm (*enlarged*)

On the back of the piece, the smallest of the group, is a figurine of a thin and very stylized frog. The incised signs on the flat area (a cobra with the *nefer* sign) read: "the perfect uraeus".

G) Miscellaneous

21. Dark green-glazed yellowish stone

L: 1.3 cm (*enlarged*)

The back is rounded and even. It is decorated with an incised motif representing a flower with four petals and volutes. On the flat area, a falcon with spread wings surrounds the words "the perfect god, lord of the lands".

22. Blue-glazed stone

L: 1.1 cm (*enlarged*)

A hippopotamus lying down is represented on the back. It is depicted with the head raised and directed toward the viewer. Its legs are barely indicated under the abdomen. This iconography, although rare, is attested by other pieces.

The very interesting inscription seems to indicate the name of the goddess Amunet-Bastet (feminine form of Amun, assimilated to Bastet); this could be the pacified form of the consort of Amun, the lion goddess Mut.

23. Light blue faience

L: 1.1 cm (*enlarged*)

A lightly incised Hathoric sistrum decorates the back of the amulet. The flat side is occupied by a popular motif, composed of four lotus buds. Their meaning could be related to the verb "to rejoice" and thus to Hathor, the goddess of joy and pleasure.

24. Light blue faience (?)

L: 1.2 cm (*enlarged*)

The pattern represented in relief on the back could depict the wings of an insect or two lotus buds. The inscription ("can do anything") is problematic, especially since it is surrounded by a cartouche whose purpose remains unknown.

25. Green-glazed yellowish stone

L: 1.2 cm (*enlarged*)

The subject carved on the back is unclear: it could be a duck, a flower bud, or a pair of insect wings. The inscription mentions a famous pharaoh "Men-kheper-Re (Thutmose III) the perfect god." The inscription, with several possible variants, is widespread (see B9 and C12).

PROVENANCE

Ex: Jan Chalk collection and, by descent, of his family, Germany; acquired from Toufic Saad in Alexandria, France Street, in 1955.

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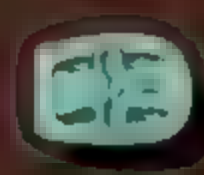
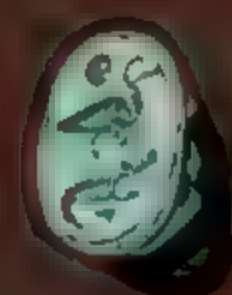
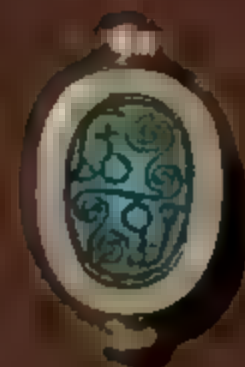




Plate with Lotuses

Egyptian, end of New Kingdom–Third Intermediate Period (late 2nd–early 1st millennium B.C.)

Light blue faience

D: 15.5 cm (1:1)

Although the edge is partially chipped, the plate is complete and in good condition. The glaze retains its original luster and light blue color. The motifs were painted in black (with manganese oxide). In places the surface is covered with groups of small superficial holes.

The form is surprisingly simple: the upper part is circular and flat, while the bottom is slightly rounded; the plate has no handles. The decoration, as essential as the shape, is limited to three flowers drawn in the shape of a calyx with pointed petals, of a type that Egyptians call "lotus"; they are arranged in a triangle, with the largest lotus surmounted by two smaller ones, the three connected by an S-shaped stem. **Black lines outline the edge of the plate, whose lower part is undecorated.**

Even though the form of this plate is not related to that of a cup, the general type and the painted motifs may be connected to a class of more or less deep bowls that are often designated "Nun cups" because of their color and decoration, which are reminiscent of the swampy banks of the Nile. (According to ancient Egyptian belief, Nun was the primordial oceanic abyss that generated all forms of life. Along with the lotus flower, a symbol of the sun and rebirth, another archetypal motif for this type of vessel was the *tiapia* (Nile carp), fish known to protect their eggs by carrying them in their mouth until the young hatch – as if the species would self-generate – a potent sign of rebirth and regeneration.)

Attested especially in the early New Kingdom, "Nun cups" were sometimes included in the tomb furniture of middle- and upper-class graves, often in women's tombs, where they were placed directly in the sarcophagus. But most of these vessels, often fragmentary, were excavated in the sanctuaries of the goddess Hathor. Elements deriving from Hathoric iconography are present in the painted motifs of many specimens.

The exact use of this group of faience "cups" and the practices to which they were linked remain unknown. Did they serve as libation cups, as plates for the lotus offering to the deity, or as a last sacrament given to a dying person? Their connection to rituals that were performed in the context of Hathoric and/or funerary cults seems certain, along with a meaning related to the ideas of birth and rebirth.

PROVENANCE

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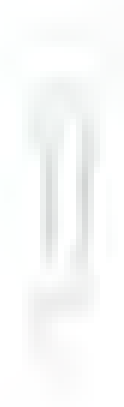
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Chalice in the Shape of a Lotus

Egyptian, Third Intermediate Period (late 2nd–early 1st millennium B.C.)

Blue faience

H: 9.2 cm (1:1)

The goblet is complete, but was re-glazed and slightly repaired. The beautiful deep blue color still retains its original luster, particularly on the foot. The chalice is simple and elegant in form and represents a lotus flower, still half-closed, whose corolla and sepals are indicated by highly stylized black lines.

Lotus-shaped faience chalices appeared during the 18th Dynasty and remained popular until the early 1st millennium, during the 22nd Dynasty. They are generally blue in color with black details, although there are known examples painted in polychromatic faience, decorated with narrative scenes in relief. Some examples of particularly high quality have square, rather than circular mouths.

There are two recognized typological groups: a long and slender chalice shape, and a broad and rounded shape, most likely representing the two varieties of lotus that existed in ancient Egypt. In addition to faience, materials such as stone, glass, and precious metals were used to manufacture this type of vessel.

As with other works made of noble materials, faience lotus-chalices were certainly intended for the wealthiest classes. The precise use of these vessels remains unknown. However, the lotus is symbolically connected to birth and rebirth and was most likely used for ritual or votive purposes during religious festivals, in funerary proceedings, or simply as drinking goblets.

See also (36).

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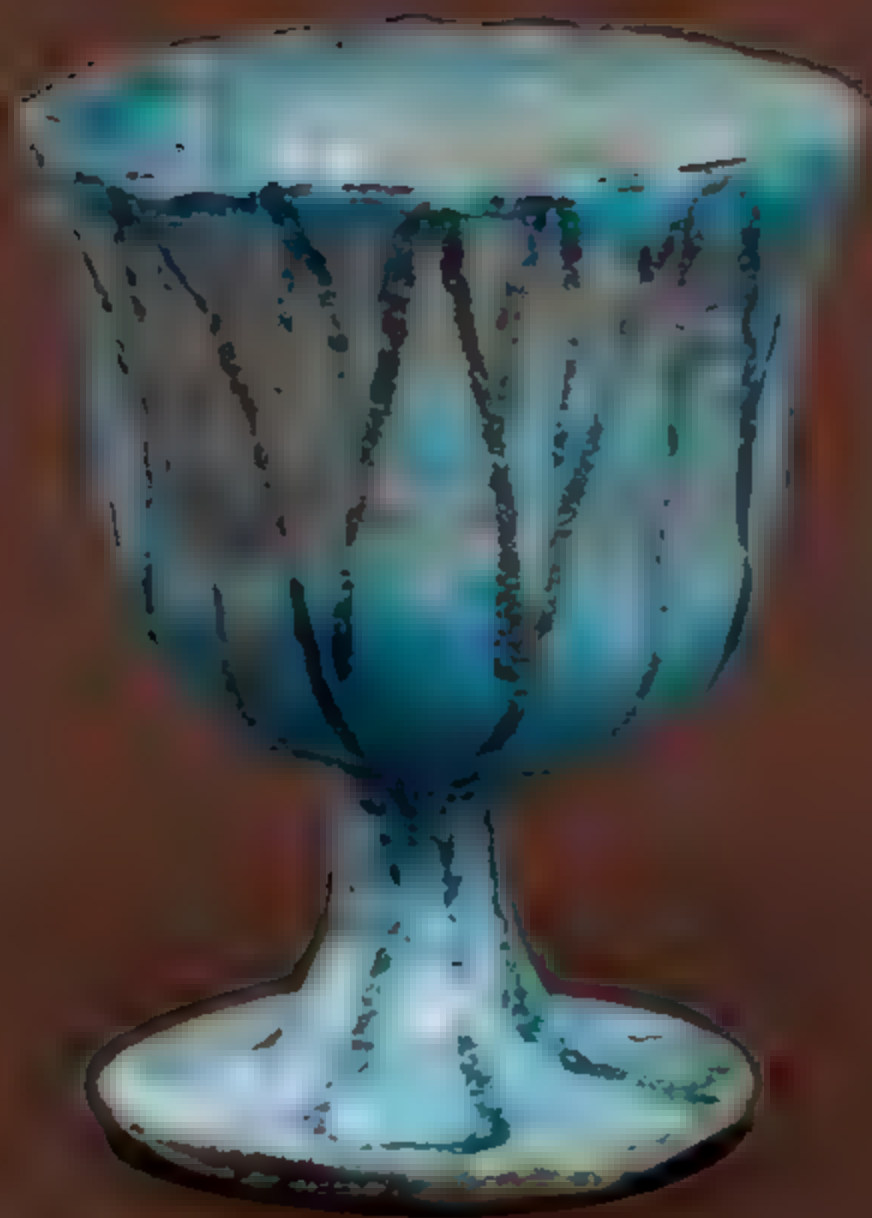
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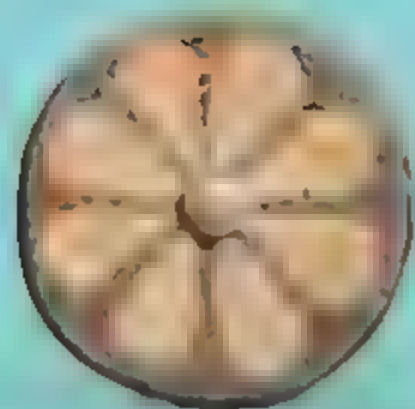
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Ornaments Representing Rosettes

Egyptian, Dynasty 19–20 (ca. 13th–11th century B.C.)

Gray, white, and yellow faience

H: 9.2 cm (1:1)

Both disks reproduce the same floral pattern but with a few variants. The smaller applique, on the gray background of the faience, contains a rosette with eight white petals, a stylized outline, and a yellow knob indicating the center. The other ornament is composed of a flower similar in type, but placed within an ample gray diamond pattern and surrounded by a large circular white frame. The back of both objects is flat. Such appliques were widely used as architectural decorations in the New Kingdom: they were encrusted in or riveted to walls of palaces, tombs, and other buildings. But these stylized flowers were also one of the most common ornamental motifs of ancient Egypt. Sometimes made of metal or glass, or simply painted or carved, they enriched jewelry, fabrics, hairpieces, etc.

Among the closest parallels for these pieces are the ornaments from the small palace of Teve-Yahudya in the Nile Delta, where nineteenth-century archaeological excavations uncovered a small palace whose walls were decorated with myriads of similar disks. Since the palace was built by Ramses III, the disks under discussion can be dated to Dynasty 20.

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Ushabti of Nestanebtasheru

Egyptian, Dynasty 21 (early 1st millennium B.C.)

Blue faience

H: 15 cm (I:I)

This statuette is virtually intact: the intense turquoise blue color, which contributes strongly to the aesthetic of the piece, retains its original luster. The anatomical details, the toes of the *ushabti*, and the long inscription are black-glazed. Following standard, widely attested iconography, the statuette is mummyiform: the figure, wrapped in a shroud, stands upright, both feet together. The hands are crossed on the chest and hold tools necessary for agricultural work (here, a pair of A-shaped hoes), while a trapezoidal seed sack hangs behind her back. This *ushabti* wears a tripartite wig, whose locks are indicated by vertical lines. Certain facial features were modeled (nose, mouth); others painted black (eyes, brows).

A long inscription of eight columns indicates the name and titles of the owner of this figurine, a woman, and also contains a long excerpt from chapter 6b of the Egyptian Book of the Dead. It is noteworthy that the scribe wrote a few signs taken directly from the hieratic or gnostic without giving the hieroglyphic transposition as he did for the rest of the spell.

This *ushabti* belonged to Nestanebtasheru, a woman renowned during Dynasty 21. A major figure in the family of the Theban priest-kings in the early first millennium B.C., she bore the title "Superior of the Harem of Amun, Prophet of Min, Prophet of Osiris, Foremost of Noble Ladies." This amazing series of names makes her a precursor of the divine worshippers of Dynasty 25, whose importance is well attested, since they marked the rise to power of female clergy, whose titles were formerly honorific. Moreover, this woman is also famous for having owned the Greenfield Papyrus, found at Deir el-Bahari near Thebes, now in the British Museum (London): this papyrus contains the longest preserved version of the Book of the Dead.

Like many *ushabtis* from Dynasty 21 that are currently part of public collections (the Louvre, for example) as well as private ones, this piece comes from the well-known royal cache of Deir el-Bahari, discovered in the 1870's, the rich furniture of which was largely published by Maspero in 1889.

From the late New Kingdom on, the iconography and purpose of the *ushabtis* seem to have been standardized: from substitutes for the deceased, these figurines became slaves at that time and served for their masters in the chores of daily life. In the most humble tombs, the funerary figurines were simply made of terra-cotta or raw clay covered with a white slip.

See also (40) and (41).

PROVENANCE

Ex-American private collection, acquired between 1970 and 1989; the piece originally comes from the famous cache at Deir el-Bahari (near Thebes) found around 1870.

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On the tomb:

MASPERO G., *Les momies royales de Deir el-Bahari*, (Paris, 1889).



Ushabti with the name of Nestanebtasheru

Egyptian, Dynasty 21 (early 1st millennium B.C.)

Blue faience

H: 14.8 cm (l.l.)

Except for minor cracks (right shoulder) and concretions on the glaze (right leg, head) the statuette is complete and almost intact. The glaze retains its original luster. The details of the face, the wig, the toes, and the inscription were painted black but have been slightly erased. A long inscription of eight vertical columns on the legs of the figure relates a long excerpt from chapter 6b of the Book of the Dead and indicates the titles of the deceased, who in this case was a woman. Like the *ushabtis* (39) and (41), this statuette belonged to *Nestanebtasheru*, a well-attested woman of Dynasty 21, and comes from the royal cache at Deir el-Bahari.

See also (39) and (41).

PROVENANCE

Ex-Ruecht (1934–2010, collection, Geneva, Switzerland, collected between the 1950s and the 1990s; the piece originally comes from the famous cache at Deir el-Bahari (near Thebes) found around 1870.

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On the tomb:

MASPERO G., *Les momies royales de Deir el-Bahari*, (Paris, 1889).



Ushabti with the name of Nestanebtasheru

Egyptian, Dynasty 21 (early 1st millennium B.C.)

Blue faience

H: 14.7 cm (1:1)

This *ushabti* is complete and perfectly preserved: the glaze, which retains its original lustre, shows minor bubbles. The inscriptions and details, painted black, are slightly erased.

For the classification see (39) and (40) who belonged to the same figure (Nestanebtasheru was a woman who belonged to a family of priest-kings during Dynasty 21) and were found in same circumstances (royal cache at Deir el-Bahari, near Thebes).

See also (39) and (40)

PROVENANCE

Ex-R. Liechi (1934–2010) collection, Geneva, Switzerland, collected between the 1950's and the 1990's, acquired at the Antiquarian Fair in Zurich; the piece originally comes from the famous cache at Deir el-Bahari (near Thebes) found around 1870.

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Amulet/Necklace Bead of Isis

Egyptian, Third Intermediate Period (Dynasty 22–23, ca. 945–715 B.C.)

Greenish blue faience

Dim: 2.1 × 1.7 cm (*enlarged*)

Pierced from top to bottom with a suspension hole, the rectangular, hollow amulet is intact. On one side is an image carved in openwork and on the other a brief prophylactic inscription.

The scene on the front represents Isis, a major deity in the Egyptian pantheon, suckling her son Horus. She is shown in the marshes of the Nile Delta, in Chemmis, where she had hidden to escape the persecution of Seth. The many papyrus stalks that surround the goddess are intended to suggest the swampy landscape. Wearing the crown of Hathor (with cow's horns and a lunar disk) Isis, the young mother, sits enthroned and, with her right hand, offers her breast to the child she balances on her lap.

On the other side, framed by a beaded pattern arranged along the edges, an inscription comprised of several hieroglyphic signs reads "Behind Isis, there is no fear." Worn on the chest near the heart, the amulet was thus meant to encourage the deceased and allow him or her to face the judgment of the afterlife.

PROVENANCE

Ex: Toufic Saad collection, Alexandria, France Street, collected in the 1950's; acquired before 1980

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Amulet Representing a Woman Nursing Her Baby

Egyptian, Third Intermediate Period (ca. 10th–7th century B.C.)

Light green faience

H: 15 cm (I:I)

The well-preserved statuette is complete. Its pale green faience surface highlighted with brownish black painted elements that indicate anatomical details, ornaments, hair, and the tattoos that cover the woman's body. The circular spots that decorate the surface (on the body of Bes and on the face of the woman) place this statuette within the group of "dotted faience" figurines, a type found in the eastern Delta in archaeological contexts dated to the late Third Intermediate Period.

The composition is rather complex. A woman, standing upright on a small rectangular base, is entirely nude but adorned with jewelry (necklace, bracelets). In her left hand, she holds a baby to whom she offers her breast with her right hand. This pose clearly refers to the iconography of Isis suckling her son Horus, but in this statuette the woman's hair, which is divided into four triangular tufts arranged on a bald head, and her wide pug nose suggest a person of African origin, perhaps a Nubian. Under the woman's legs is an image of the god Bes, the guardian spirit who assisted expectant mothers and newborns and, through his ugliness, dispelled evil. On his neck and near his knees are small figures of a vervet, the black-faced monkey connected to the myth of the Distant Goddess. In this legend, which symbolizes the annual cycle of the sun and the Nile floods, the vervet had to bring back Hathor, the Distant Goddess, from her exile in southern Egypt.

This statuette thus presents a complete thematic network that goes beyond the "classical" image of Isis nursing Horus. With its convincing references to eroticism and fertility (nudity, rounded shapes), to protecting and feeding children, and to the original myths, the statuette can be included in the group of talismans d'*heureuse maternité* ("happy motherhood"), a large series of faience amulets meant to neutralize and distance evil, primarily from pregnant women and infants. According to J. Bultot, who published a monograph on the subject, this woman would be a type of "synthesis" of several deities charged with overseeing breastfeeding mothers, particularly Isis, Hathor, and Nekhbet.

See also (44).

PROVENANCE

Christie's London, May 5, 1995, lot 76

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Amulet Representing a Cat with Her Kittens

Egyptian, Third Intermediate Period (ca. 10th–7th century B.C.)

Light blue faience

H: 6 cm (1:1)

Aside from the front quarters of the kitten resting on its mother's head, the amulet is complete and in remarkably good condition: the beautiful original turquoise-green color of the faience has been virtually preserved on the entire surface of the piece. The suspension ring is located on the upper back.

The black painted spots that cover the cat's body are not indications of her coat but rather are a distinctive feature of faience figurines of this period, often referred to as "dotted faience": such figurines usually come from the eastern Delta in the north of Egypt and are dated to the late Third Intermediate Period.

The amulet depicts a cat seated on her hind legs, protecting her kittens with a very maternal gesture: three of them sit just in front of her, while four others (two on each side) are under her forelegs. Another kitten, the most daring of the litter, has climbed on the back of its mother and is seated between her erect ears. The animals rest on a thin base that appears rectangular from the front and semicircular from the back.

Despite the animal guise, the piece is related to mother-and-child amulets that were supposed to protect against disease and childbirth accidents.

The cat here probably represents the goddess Bastet, who was very popular during the Third Intermediate Period. Because of the general insecurity that characterized this period, the evolution of the regional Egyptian religions gave rise to a multiplicity of protective figures and divinities. This religious innovation translated into a large increase in the production of apotropaic figurines made of faience or other materials, such as metal and terracotta.

Bastet was the mild-mannered, sweet incarnation of the dangerous goddess Sekhmet. She appeared as both a cat and a cat-headed woman—or a lioness; for her frightening nature always slept within her. Mistress of all the cats that she commanded, she was venerated throughout Egypt, offering special protection to the family home, women in childbirth, and small children. Her main shrine stood at Bubastis (Tell Basta), which became a capital city during Dynasty 22. Once a year, the temple attracted pilgrims from all walks of life for festivals during which, as Herodotus wrote much later, wine was always plentiful. During these festivals, dead cats were brought to the temple and mummified.

See also (43), (45) and (73)

PROVENANCE

Bonham's London, April 26, 2001, lot 187

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Amulets of the Goddess Bastet

Egyptian, 3rd Intermediary Period (ca. 10th–8th century B.C.)

Blue faience

H: 5.8 cm (1:1)

Pierced in the back, between the shoulders of the figurine, this amulet is intact. Despite its fragility and delicacy, the surface retains its original blue color and displays an excellent state of preservation.

Bastet's throne was made using a technique widespread at the end of the New Kingdom and into the beginning of the first millennium B.C. The faience was first cast, and then the openwork was created by cutting away unwanted elements with a knife.

The goddess Bastet was very popular at the end of the Bronze Age. This figure has the body of a young woman with a slender figure draped in a long, tight robe hanging to her feet, and the head of a feline. The hybrid figure is sitting on a low-backed throne, the sides of which are decorated with snakes, representing Nehebkau, a primordial divinity of a bountiful and nourishing nature. Bastet holds a sistrum, a so-called naoform, in her right hand, balancing it with her chin. In her left hand, a sceptre of papyrus is supported by her body. She wears a tripartite wig which falls on her chest and back. A cat's pointed muzzle replaces a human face and the replacement of the cat's mane by a human wig seems almost natural. Despite the small size of the amulet, the quality of work is excellent and a number of anatomical details have been rendered with precision, especially, the eyes, eyebrows, nose and mouth.

Representations of the goddess Bastet were very popular during the Third Intermediate Period, when the evolution of the regional Egyptian religions gave rise to a multiplicity of protective divinities, including Bastet, Bes, Ptah-Patek, etc. This religious innovation translated into a large increase in the production of figurines. Faience was the most popular material for these figurines, with examples far outnumbering those made of metal or semiprecious stone.

Bastet is the mild-mannered, sweet incarnation of the dangerous goddess Sekhmet, who appears as both a cat and a lion. Mistress of all the ills which she commanded, Bastet is the patron of the priestly doctors of Sekhmet. She protected women in childbirth and children. Her temple stood at Tel Basta (Per Bast, Bastet's house), the Capital of Egypt during the XXI^e Dynasty. Once a year, the temple attracted pilgrims from all walks of Egyptian life for festivals where, Herodotus tells us, wine was always plentiful. During these festivals, dead cats were brought to the temple and mummified. Numerous cat mummies have been found in the temple's catacombs.

According to some scholars, the shape of the ears indicate whether a figurine is a representation of Bastet (who has the pointed ears of a cat) or Sekhmet (who has the rounded ears of a lion).

See also (44) and (73)

PROVENANCE

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Pendant with the Head of Bes

Egyptian, Third Intermediate Period (ca. 10th–8th century B.C.)

Green and black faience

D: 5.2 cm (*enlarged*)

The *plaque* is complete, but it has been reassembled. It was horizontally pierced for a suspension string, which would have allowed the amulet to be worn as a necklace, for example.

This disk-shaped object with a flat back shows an indented pattern on the edge. In the center, the medallion is occupied by a head of Bes, which as a *pars pro toto* (part for the whole) represents the whole figure of the deity. It is partly decorated in openwork and partly carved in sunk relief. This type of disk is known from many parallels distributed throughout the eastern Mediterranean as far as Cyprus.

Despite the stylization, the mask of the god appears here with his usual grotesque features: a flattened face seen frontally, a deeply wrinkled forehead, eyes wide open, pug nose, leonine ears, wide crushed cheeks, a big mustache, and a long beard. Only the mouth, surprisingly small and without visible fangs, is slightly unusual. On his head, Bes wears his traditional headdress made of feathers, which are alternately painted in black.

This genie, known as early as the Old Kingdom but whose popularity significantly rose from the New Kingdom on, became one of the most famous figures of the Egyptian pantheon from the Third Intermediate Period onward and then throughout the first millennium B.C. Primarily a protector of women and children, Bes aided women in labor and watched after newborns. His terrifying ugliness ward off evil spirits and diseases. Bes was also the patron of musicians and dancers.

Privileged witnesses of popular piety, figurines and images of this god were very widespread in the Egyptian world. Used as talismans, they could, for instance, be worn as a jewel pendant, suspended from a door or in a room, threaded on a stick or on a pole, or placed at the corners of a bed. Some pieces might have served as rattles for children.

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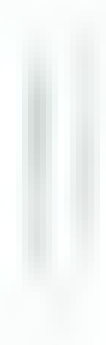
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Statuette of the Goddess Taweret

Egyptian, late New Kingdom–Third Intermediate Period (ca. 1000 B.C.)

“Egyptian Blue” frit

H: 7.8 cm (*enlarged*)

This statuette, molded in slightly friable, homogeneous light blue frit, is in overall good condition, but the hands (or the claws) and the lower legs are missing, as is the attribute that once was soldered to the creature’s belly. A grayish patina partially covers the surface.

The figure represents Taweret (“the great”), a female deity of composite form: standing on her hind legs, she probably stepped forward on her left leg. Her tightening body is composed of the head and pregnant abdomen of a hippopotamus, the legs of a lion and the back and tail of a crocodile. Only the tripartite hairstyle and the full, pendulous breasts resemble human features. The arms curve inward along the body to the belly, where the goddess probably held her usual attribute, the ssa, a symbol of protection. A finely crafted necklace with three rows of small beads adorns her chest. On her head, she wears a small cylindrical modius whose edge is slightly chipped. The chip may indicate that the headgear of this Taweret would have been completed by a horned solar disk, a sign of her divine origin.

The cult of Taweret, which was already widespread during the Old Kingdom, became very popular in the Third Intermediate Period, when statuettes, amulets, and pendants were produced in large numbers. But the remarkable artistic quality of this example distinguishes it from those mass-produced objects. Despite some wear on the surface, the details and the freshness of the forms—perfectly modeled and rounded, as well as the precise, expertly incised details—are clearly visible. The head with its strong bone structure, mouth ajar to reveal the tusks, the pointed ears and deep eye sockets (the eyes were probably inlaid), the central part of the back with bones and scales that reproduce a crocodile’s skin, the striped wig ending in ribbons—all these elements contribute to the excellent quality of the work and relate it to the finest figurines of Taweret, for example, the specimen in the Louvre.

Ancient Egyptians believed that Taweret assimilated and synthesized the threatening properties of three common and very dangerous animals of ancient Egypt—hippo, lion, and crocodile—turning them into positive symbols of protection. The numerous statuettes and amulets of Taweret, like those of Bes, the guardian spirit with the appearance of a dwarf, thus had an apotropaic function. The prominent breasts and pregnant condition reflect the other role of Taweret: that of a fertility deity. In this capacity, she primarily assisted women in labor and those who had just given birth, dispelling evil. With the baby under her protection, especially to ensure that there would be sufficient mother’s milk, she functioned as a nurse who cared for the newborn.

See also (48), (49) and (50)

PROVENANCE

Ex-Guy Weil Goudchaux private collection; acquired in Paris, at the Louvre des Antiquaires, in 1980.

PUBLISHED IN

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On Taweret

WILKINSON, R. H., *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt* (London, 2003), pp. 185–86.



Amulet of Taweret

Egyptian, Late Period (ca. 7th–4th century B.C.)

Pale green faience

H: 3.5 cm (*enlarged*)

Except for the legs, now lost, the figurine is perfectly preserved. The suspension ring was soldered to the center of the back.

Typologically the figurine corresponds to the usual iconography of Taweret, the hippopotamus goddess, as she appeared in the first millennium. Standing upright in a strictly frontal position, she has a female torso with rather voluminous and inharmonious shapes, and the head of a hippopotamus. Her arms hang down along the sides, her breasts droop, and her belly is prominent and rounded. A tripartite coiffure with incised locks covers her head. The muzzle of the hippopotamus is large and powerful, with the mouth ajar to reveal tusks. The ears are pointed and the eyes bulge. The back is covered with a vertical band with edges that recall the tail and skin of a crocodile.

Despite its miniature size, this amulet is of the highest quality and is on a par with the best examples of this type of figurine.

As a cult figure, the hippopotamus was both worshipped and feared in ancient Egypt. Nevertheless, the many amulets carved in the image of this animal, which was very commonly seen on the banks of the Nile during the pharaonic period, usually represent its protective aspect. Standing upright with sagging breasts and pregnant abdomen, Taweret appeared in birth scenes as a benevolent figure from very ancient times, especially protecting women in labor, birth, and childhood.

See also (47), (49) and (50)

PROVENANCE

Ex-R. Liechi (1934–2010) collection, Geneva, Switzerland, collected between the 1950's and the 1990's.

PUBLISHED IN

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On Taweret

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Amulet of Taweret

Egyptian, Late Period (ca. 7th–4th century B.C.)

Blue faience

H: 5.9 cm (*enlarged*)

The figurine is virtually intact: only a small fragment of the right leg has been restored. The matte-looking surface is covered with a light patina. The sculptor did not hollow out the space between the legs, probably to avoid weakening an area that often breaks. The suspension ring is situated in the center of the back.

The iconography of this Taweret, the hippopotamus goddess like that of (48), (50) and (47) corresponds to an image that was widespread from the Third Intermediate Period on. Here, the deity stands upright on a rectangular base; her frontal pose is typical of Egyptian statuary. The head of this hybrid creature is that of the Nubian pachyderm (very common in the Pharaonic period), while the body has female shapes: the sagging breasts and swollen belly of a pregnant woman. The arms, slightly bent, end with leonine claws. Her legs are those of an animal, perhaps a lion, and the skin of her back and the tail suggest a crocodile.

This figurine of Taweret, whose technical and artistic qualities are outstanding, has proportions that are more slender than those of most other amulets of this type.

See also (47), (48) and (50)

PROVENANCE

Ex: R. Leclerc (1934–2010) collection, Geneva, Switzerland, collected between the 1950's and the 1990's.

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On Taweret

WILKINSON R. H., *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt* (London, 2003), pp. 185–186.





Statuette/Amulet of the Goddess Taweret

Egyptian, Late Period–Ptolemaic Period (ca. 7th–1st century B.C.)

Light blue faience

H. 9.2 cm

This statuette, provided with a suspension ring soldered to the back at shoulder height, shows brown sh red traces (especially on the head and shoulders) and non-glazed white marks, which probably result from a problem that occurred during the firing process. The legs and part of the abdomen are missing.

Like the figures (48), (49) and (47), this statuette represents the goddess Taweret in her usual iconography of the first millennium B.C. Standing on her legs/paws, this deity is characterized by her composite nature, a seemingly female body and a hippopotamus head, a tripartite hairstyle, striped vertically hanging arms provided with lion's claws, and a crocodile skin on the back. Despite its size, much larger than the average for contemporary amulets, there is no indication that the figure would have held one of her usual attributes, the sa protective sign or the ankh. Although its state of preservation is imperfect, the statuette is nevertheless of outstanding quality, as evidenced by the fine proportions, the plasticity, and, chiefly, the precision of the incised details.

See also (47), (48) and (49)

PROVENANCE

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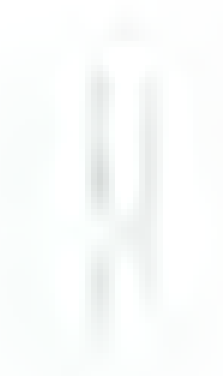
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On Taweret

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Circular Pyxis with a Lid

Near Eastern, early 1st millennium B.C.

Multicolored faience

D: 10.6 cm (l:l)

The pyxis is virtually intact, but the glaze that covers the entire vessel has partially faded. The colors used are white, yellow, and turquoise blue, and a darker blue for the painted patterns on the lid and on the body. Under the base, some irregularities on the glaze suggest the use of a *permette* during the firing process.

The pyxis has simple, rather low and wide cylindrical shape without handles. Its flat, discoidal lid is equipped with a handling button that resembles a rosette, which allowed easy lifting.

The two holes symmetrically pierced in the lid correspond to the cylindrical tenons modeled inside the pyxis. With the help of a string or with small stems, the box could be completely closed, so as to better preserve the content.

The decoration is characterized by rich polychromy and lack of limits or precise lines between the different elements, which therefore remain slightly blurred. The painted yellow, blue, or white motifs are geometric: lines, stripes, triangles, or chains of circles. All the inside and the bottom are turquoise blue; the underside of the lid is white.

Pyxides with lids are part of a long tradition in Near Eastern faience (see (8) et (9)) that dates back to the Bronze Age: varied in sizes and shapes (cylindrical, globular, with gadroons, square with three feet), they were remarkably popular in many regions. Archaeological excavations have uncovered them in Elam, in the Levant, and in northwestern Iran, where (especially in the surroundings of Ziwiye) the cylindrical and square variants were still produced in the early first millennium.

Despite morphological and stylistic differences (e.g., tenons on the outside of the vessel, domed lid, some painted patterns), several of the pyxides from Ziwiye display a rich polychromy and a somewhat "blurred" style like the present example, which can be identically classified.

PROVENANCE

Acquired on the French art market in 2004

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Globular Bottle

Iranian (neo-Elamite, Susa?) or Assyrian, 8th century B.C.

Polychrome faience

H: 9.8 cm (l:l)

Except for small chips on the lower part of the body and on the lip, the vessel is complete. The glaze is still clearly visible, though it has faded, and it is no longer possible to determine precisely what the original colors were—light green parts (or possibly cobalt blue?) alternate with other creamy yellow and white parts. Each frieze is separated by blackish gray lines. To the touch, the height of relief differs for each color.

The form of the bottle, with the spherical body surmounted by a low flared neck whose mouth is narrow, recalls Assyrian or Northern Iranian examples (see (53)). **The well-rounded bottom does not allow the vessel to stand upright.**

The somewhat repetitive decoration is based only on geometric motifs. Four light green zigzag friezes running around the body are each framed by white and yellow stripes, and divided by blackish gray bands, which emphasize the well-structured geometric composition. The neck is painted in light green (inside and outside) while on the underside of the base is a rosette with triangular petals of alternating colors. During the first half of the first millennium B.C. (especially 8th–7th century), a similar style of ceramic painting (faience, as here, or glazed ceramic) is attested in Elam, mostly in the ancient city of Susa. In this region of southwestern Iran, the tradition of manufacturing faience objects (vessels, statuettes, architectural decorations) continued from the Middle Elamite period of the Late Bronze Age (see (51)). The most common forms were bottles with an ovoid or a globular body with or without handles and with a rounded or flat bottom. Zigzags, concentric circles, and languets were among the repertoire of motifs, which were highlighted with polychromatic glazes—colors similar to those on this bottle. Other bottles, decorated with narrow, closely spaced undulating lines, probably imitated the new decorations seen on glass vessels.

PROVENANCE

Acquired on the German art market in 2000

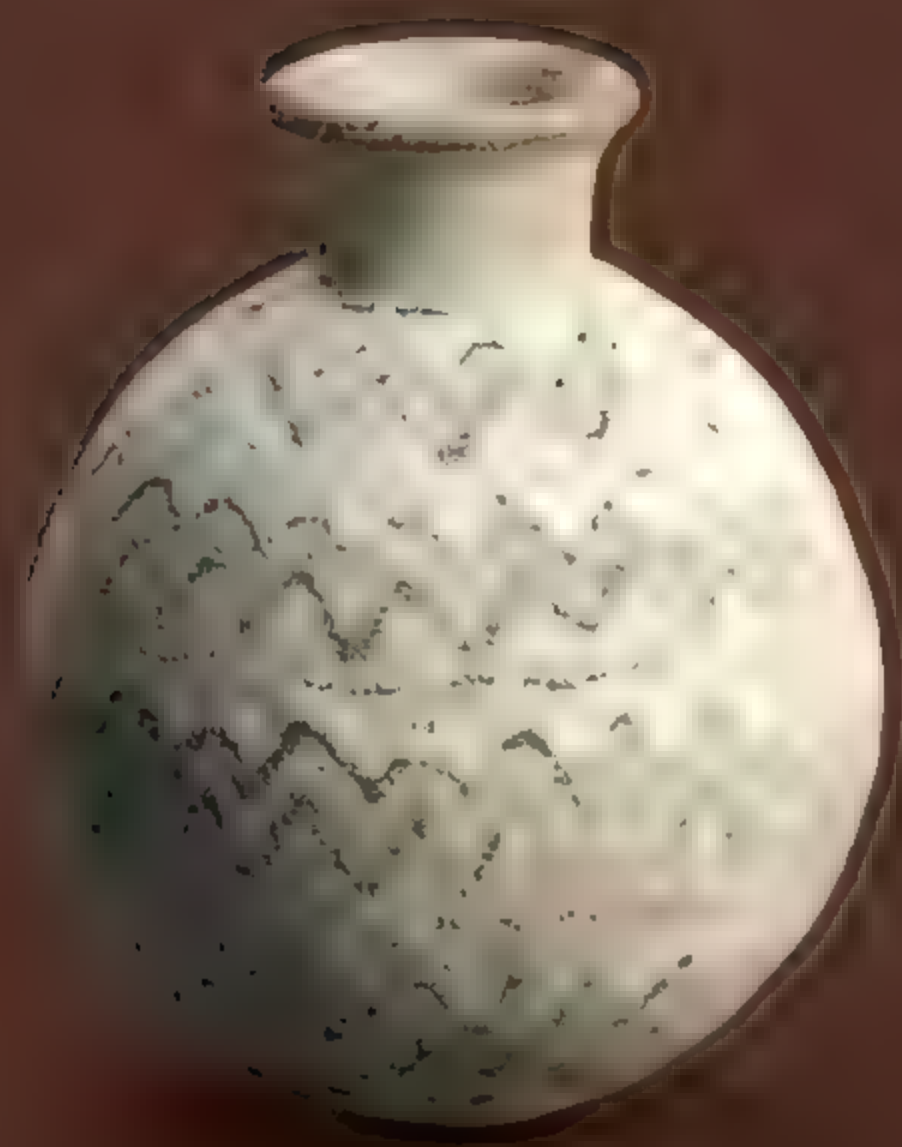
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Jar without Handles

Iranian, 9th century B.C.

Polychrome faience

H: 9.7 cm (l:l)

This vessel is complete, except for minor chips. The thick layer of glaze, which covers the entire jar (including the inside), is in very good condition on half of the vessel but partially damaged on the other half. The very bright palette of colors (light blue on the body, with yellow, white, and blue petals) is a distinctive feature of faience vessels from this region.

Its simple shape and polychromy contribute to the striking presentation made by this small vessel. The globular body turns into a high neck with a slightly flared wall, surmounted by a thick rounded lip. The decoration is limited to the shoulder area: on a broad band with a yellow background, the potter painted nine stylized petals and outlined their silhouettes in black.

Classified according to their size by S. Fukai (this specimen is among the smallest known), these jars appear to have been manufactured in the region of Zwiye and Hasanlu, in modern-day western Iran, even if many examples were excavated in various Near Eastern cities (Assur, Babylon, etc.), while "imitations" were found as far away as Elam (Susa).

The constant presence of glaze inside these small jars indicates that they were intended to store and/or transport liquids that are often thought to have been connected with funerary rites, since a number of comparable jars come from tombs.

See also (55).

PROVENANCE

Acquired on the German art market in 2000

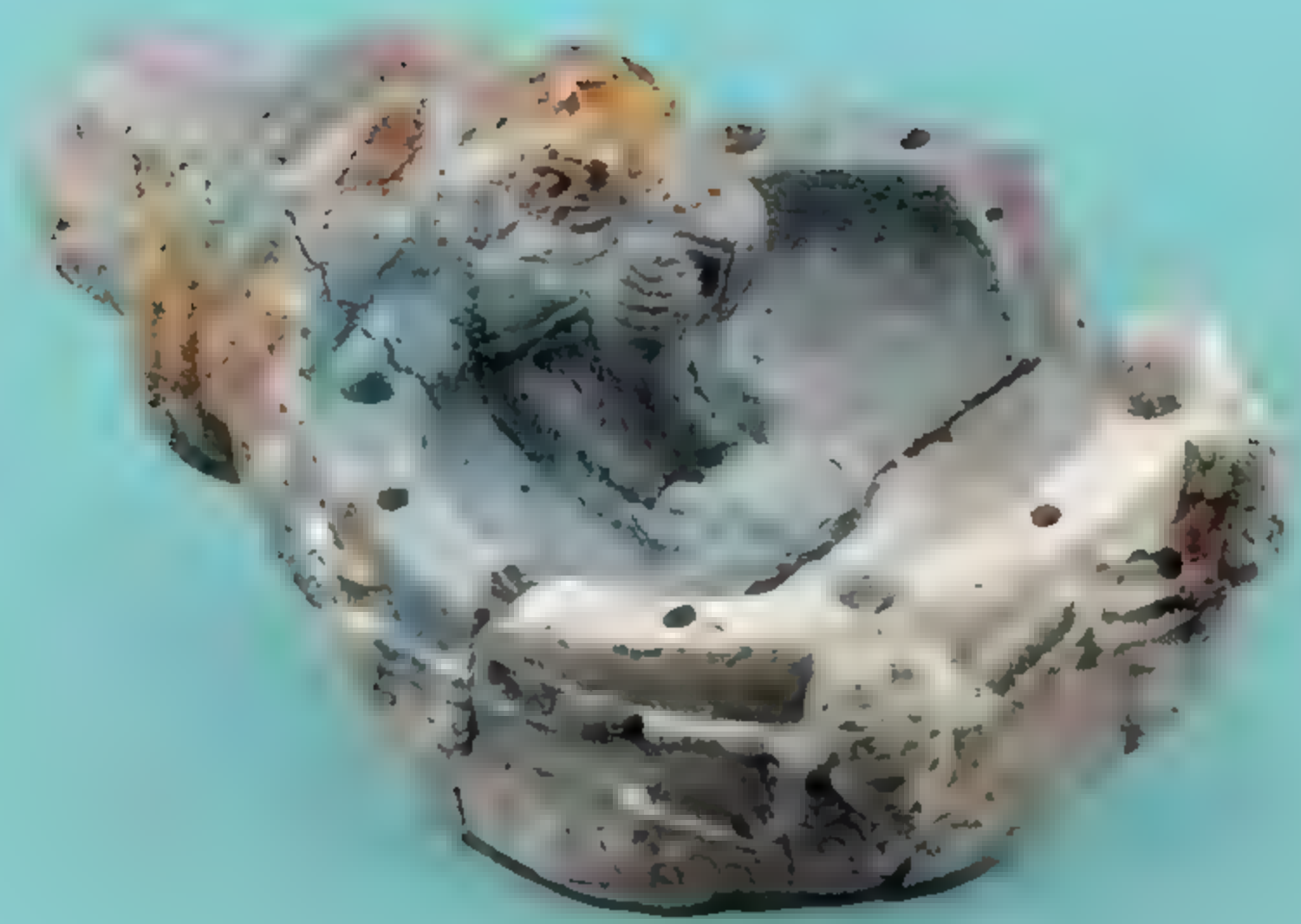
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Anointing Cup with a Leonine Protome

Syrian, 9th–8th century B.C.

Green-blue faience, red glass paste (?)

L: 12.4 cm (1:1)

The small cup is incomplete and repaired; it has been subjected to a high temperature that has damaged the glaze and the surface and has blackened the paste. The eyes of the lion and of the sphinxes were inlaid, and the wings of the sphinxes were probably decorated with elements in multicolored glass paste (there is a red fragment near the head of the right sphinx). The traces of rust on the head and on the right paw of the lion are probably the result of prolonged contact with an iron object in the soil.

This piece is composed of two elements: (a) The circular bowl has a straight wall and a convex bottom. The decoration is complex: under the bottom is a left hand in low relief, which seems to carry the vessel, while the walls are adorned with a pair of opposed sphinxes with spread wings. The two monsters are quietly seated and watch the viewer; they wear a crown or headgear, and their skin appears to be made of scales. In the back is the protome of a lion, which firmly holds the cup with its spread front legs applied to the wall. (b) A short tube with a thick edge is pierced by a horizontal pipe that goes directly to the cup through the head and open mouth of the lion.

Despite the stylization and the linearity of the design, the workmanship is excellent, as evidenced by the rendering of the seated figures with their inlays and the finely incised bodies. The lower jaw of the magnificent leonine protome is carved in relief in the cup; the creature's eyes were inlaid, and careful incisions indicate the lips, the nose, and the ears. Behind the muzzle, hatched triangles mark the hairs of the mane. Although there are noticeable morphological differences and a remarkable iconographic richness, this object can be related to a class of libation vessels numerically and archaeologically well documented: that of the small stoneware cup with a leonine protome equipped with a "pipe" which brought liquid from an outer reservoir into the bowl, but did not have a spout. While the geographic distribution of the finds is important—from Samos, a Greek island near Asia Minor, up to Hasanlu, in Iran—the center of production of these objects may be located in modern-day northern Syria, since most examples, usually carved from stoneware, come from this area. The success of these small cups is also attested by the many imitations discovered in several Mediterranean centers, sometimes made of other materials (e.g., stone, ivory, faience, or terracotta). Faience cups are among the rarest; there is a fine example from Hasanlu (Iran, golden "Egyptian blue" frit) and another from Tel Kinneret, in Israel.

Archaeologists generally assign these small cups a religious function, such as vessels for precious liquids to be offered or poured during certain rites or cults. Unfortunately, since representations of these cups have not yet been discovered, their precise use and form remain unknown. According to a recent hypothesis, the pipe may have been directly connected to a leather pouch containing a perfumed oil that could have been poured in a very precise manner into the cup and used for anointing.

Several excavation contexts indicate a date between the ninth and the seventh century B.C. for this class of objects; this is confirmed by stylistic comparisons with other monuments of Assyrian sculpture from the same period. This specimen, because of the rather linear and stylized features, is to be dated in the ninth century B.C. or early in the following century.

PROVENANCE

Acquired by M. S. Aboutaam in Beirut before 1980.

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Jar

Assyrian, 8th–7th century B.C.

Multicolored faience (white, light blue, yellow)

H: 40 cm

Despite many missing pieces, this vessel is remarkable for its size and weight (the wall is very thick), incomparably superior given the difficulty of shaping this material. The partially worn surface retains the sky blue and white colors of the glaze. The overall composition and all decorative details are still very clear.

A large oval jar with a very regular profile. It is supported by a circular, slightly concave base, a small bulge preserved on the upper shoulder indicates the former location of a handle. The jar is richly ornamented, with bands of geometric motifs (clepsydrae, volutes, triangles) that frame the main frieze, which is situated mid-body and is composed of the same figurative scene repeated twice. A standing female, seen frontally and dressed in a short tunic that reveals her breasts, holds two sphinxes by the tail—both winged monsters (with a lion's body and a woman's head) are represented in heraldic position. They lean a foreleg on a date palm tree and turn their heads toward the central figure, a high cylindrical tiara covers their heads.

This is presumably a mythological and/or cult scene: the woman who dominates wild beasts and monsters is a well-known figure in ancient Near Eastern art, the mistress of animals and wild life. It is also worth noting the presence—in the background of the scene, of numerous circular rosettes of various sizes, the internal decoration of which recalls the symbols of the star (goddess Ishtar) or even of the sun (god Shamash), without reproducing them exactly.

Although large "faience" vessels of similar size and decorations have been found in many private houses of Assur, sometimes dated to the Assyrian period, archaeologists think that these objects were made mainly for ritual purposes in the temples or that they belonged to the inventory of the royal palaces.

Large vessels comparable in size, in manufacturing technique, in shape and decoration also come from centers that were located in the northwest of modern-day Iran, like Ziwiye and Hansanlu. The exact location of this/these production center(s), remains unknown, but there probably were several workshops established in different regions.

See also (53).

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Ushabti of Horkhebi (Her-Em-Akhebit)

Egyptian, Saite Period (early Dynasty 26, mid-7th century B.C.)

Light green faience

H: 15.2 cm (1:1)

Despite a minor unevenness and a few darker stains, the figurine is intact and in remarkable condition.

Its unusual technical achievement lies in the type of faience used for the modeling—more glassy than usual (sometimes called "glassy faience")—which gives it a more compact and less porous aspect, while the surface remains smooth and matte. The addition of a significant amount of quartz to the paste yields a structure that is more closely related to glass than to traditional faience. This technique, which seems to characterize all the *ushabtis* of Horkhebi, is exceptional, but its use is attested in Egypt until the fourth century B.C.

Artistically, this *ushabti* is a beautiful example of the early stages of the period known as the Saite Renaissance. The figure stands upright on a small rectangular base, its mummiform body completely wrapped in a very finely modeled, tight funerary drapery that suggests his anatomy. The face, framed by a thick, smooth wig, has precise, strong features: the false beard, which terminates in an elegant volute, is braided and carefully incised. The hands—the only parts of the body that protrude from the shroud—appear under the chest and hold the usual tools of, a hoe and a pick, while a seed sack hangs from the figure's left shoulder.

The long inscription, composed of finely and accurately engraved signs, occupies five vertical columns, including three on the back pillar. It indicates the name of the deceased, who was a royal scribe, and his titles, as well as the long version of Chapter 6 of the Book of the Dead, which forces an *ushabti* to carry out many activities for the deceased in the afterlife.

The words indicating the general information about the figure are "The blessed with Osiris, Lord of Busiris, the royal scribe Horkhebi, a son of Khaemkhons, born from Heter-Neith." This scribe, who would have lived in early Dynasty 26, is known through more than twenty other *ushabtis*, all linked stylistically and typologically, and scattered in various museums (Paris, Bologna, London, Turin, etc.). Horkhebi's tomb was excavated at Saqqara.

PROVENANCE

Ex-English private collection, acquired from Spink and Sons in 1960; ex-R. Liechti collection, Geneva, Switzerland, collected between the 1950's and the 1990's.

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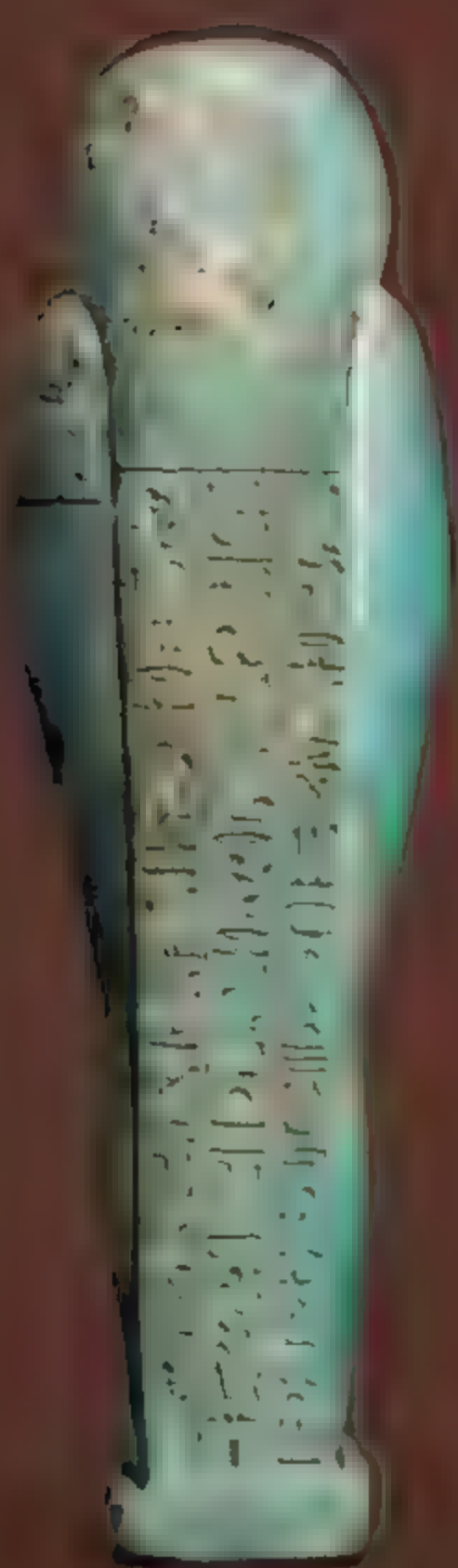
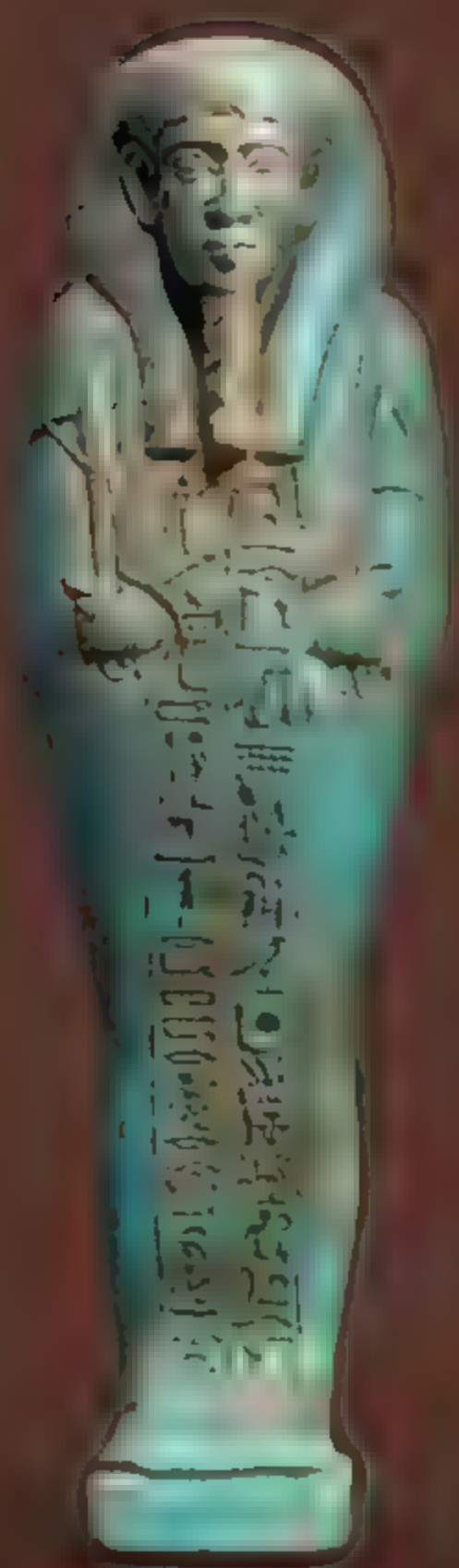
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Ushabti with the Name of Hekaemsaf

Egyptian, Saite Period (Dynasty 26, middle of the 6th century B.C.)

Light green faience

H: 18 cm (1:1)

The statuette is complete and perfectly preserved. The glaze, which largely retains its original luster, is partially covered with a greenish brown patina and shows bubbles. No details are highlighted in black.

The somewhat imprecise facial features and indistinct hieroglyphic signs probably indicate that the mold for the statuette had been reused many times.

In accordance with the usual typology of contemporary *ushabtis*, the man is standing upright on a small square pedestal. Except for the hands, which protrude from the mummy at chest level, the body is entirely wrapped in a pall. In his hands, the figure holds agricultural tools (a hoe and a pick) and the string of the seed sack that hangs behind the left shoulder. The statuette is remarkable for its slender and elongated proportions, its very finely modeled forms, and the serene, almost "smiling" face. The man wears a tripartite wig, while a false beard adorns his chin.

At the back, the balance of the statuette is maintained by a supporting pillar that includes a one-column inscription which indicates the name of the owner of the *ushabti* and some of his titles. The text also contains a short excerpt from chapter 6b of the Book of the Dead: "Ushabti of Osiris, director of the cargos of the King, Hekaemsaf. Here I am, you say at any time."

The tomb of Hekaemsaf (his name means "protected by Heka," the Egyptian god of magic) excavated in 1903, is located at Saqqara, near the pyramid of Unas. According to the wall inscriptions still legible in his tomb, this figure (a contemporary of the pharaoh Amasis) was a senior official attached to the palace who held several prominent administrative positions (among other things, he was steward of the Treasury) before becoming head of the merchant fleet (transport provisions) of the pharaoh. This latter function, probably the most important, is the only one that appears on the back of his funerary figurines.

Scholars unanimously agree that the funerary statuettes of Hekaemsaf are among the most beautiful of the Saite period. Sold by the Egyptian Antiquities Service in the years following the opening of the tomb, the *ushabtis* of Hekaemsaf currently enrich the collections of major museums (Baltimore, Cairo, Hildesheim, Lyon, Munich) and many private collectors.

PROVENANCE

Ex: R. Liechti (1934–2010) collection, Geneva, Switzerland; collected between the 1950's and the 1990's, acquired at Faustus Gallery, Geneva, 1976

PUBLISHED IN

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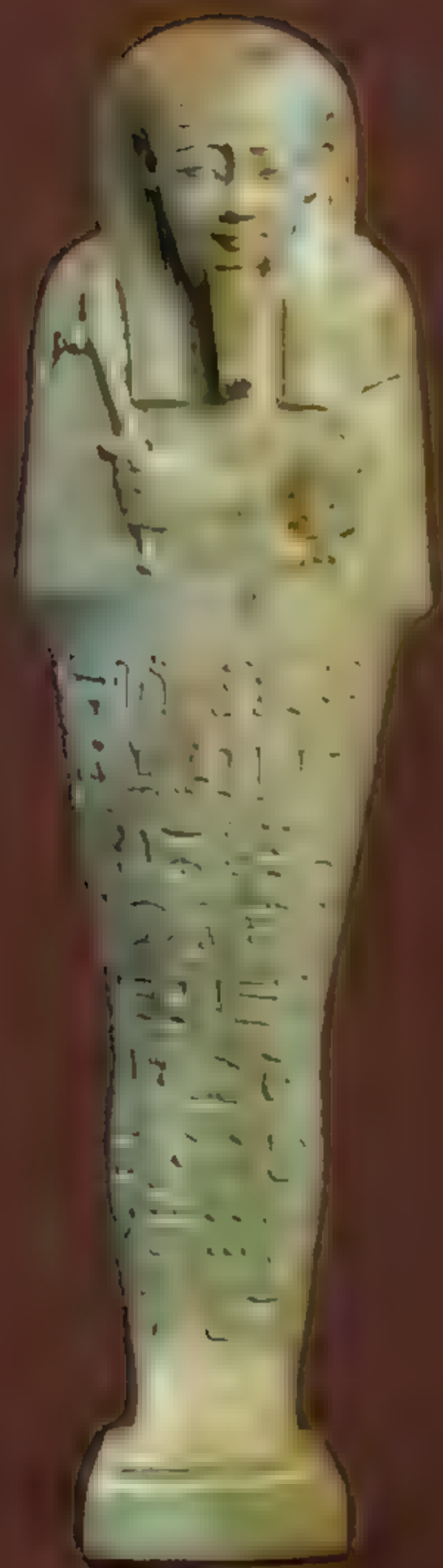
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Ushabti with the Name of Neferibresaneith

Egyptian, Saite Period (Dynasty 26, middle of the 6th century B.C.)

Light green faience

H: 19 cm (I:I)

Despite a few darker stains of patina on the surface, the figurine is intact and in remarkable condition. The balance of the figurine is maintained by the presence of a smooth, unscribed dorsal pillar; the feet are placed on a small square pedestal.

Together with the statuettes of Horkheb (see (56)), *ushabtis* of Neferibresaneith are among the most beautiful faience works of the period known as the Saite Renaissance. Everything is perfectly carved: the modeling of the body softly wrapped in the shroud, the details of the hair, the anatomy of the face, the attribute-tools, and especially the long inscription, which is composed of clear, evenly engraved signs.

Following the usual typology of these figurines, the man stands upright, his body entirely wrapped in a pall; only the hands protrude from the shroud at chest level and hold a hoe, a pick, and the string of a seed sack suspended from the left shoulder and hanging in the back. The square face, which conveys a serene, barely "smiling" expression, is framed by a tripartite wig, while a false beard adorns the chin.

The inscription occupies nine horizontal lines placed on the legs of the figurine, on both sides of the supporting pillar. It indicates the name of the deceased and of his mother (Shepenhoubastet), but it does not give his complete titles. This figure, named Neferibresaneith, was a well-known notable under the Saite dynasty. The text is completed by the long version of Chapter 6b of the Book of the Dead, which forces an *ushabti* to carry out many tasks for the deceased in the afterlife.

Other ancient sources reveal that in the reign of Pharaoh Amasis, Neferibresaneith was the *wab* priest to the king, royal chancellor of Lower Egypt, and administrator of the palace. His tomb was found at Saqqara (a shaft grave located near the pyramids of the Old Kingdom) in 1929; the *ushabtis* of Neferibresaneith, which had been deposited on the lid of the anthropoid sarcophagus, were subsequently sold by the Egyptian Antiquities Service and are currently housed in many public and private collections worldwide.

This *ushabti* represents the same figure as statuettes (59) et (60). From the small but numerous stylistic and textual differences (the rendering of the face and the modeling of the chest and body are not exactly the same, the engraved text is not always identical, and some hieroglyphic signs show differences between one example and another), these *ushabtis* can be divided into four groups, each "descending" from a different matrix. After the statuette was removed from the mold, the finishing touches were done by hand. This demonstrates that the pieces were mass-produced, probably by several craftsmen, or that they were executed in different workshops.

The three examples presented here seem to have been made from three different molds.

See also (59) and (60).

PROVENANCE

Found in 1929 at Saqqara, ex-M. Chikara Watanabe collection, Japan, acquired in Europe or Japan in 1976.

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Ushabti with the Name of Neferibresaneith

Egyptian, Saite Period (Dynasty 26, middle of the 6th century B.C.)

Light green faience

H: 18.5 cm (l:l)

The statuette is virtually intact although the surface is partially covered with patina.

This figure belongs to the series of *ushabtis* of Neferibresaneith, a well-known noble of Dynasty 26. Like all such figurines, this example is characterized by remarkable artistic qualities, comparable to the best contemporary faience.

See also (58) and (60) who represent the same figure.

PROVENANCE

Ex: R. Liechi (1934–2010) collection, Geneva, Switzerland; collected between the 1950's and the 1990's.

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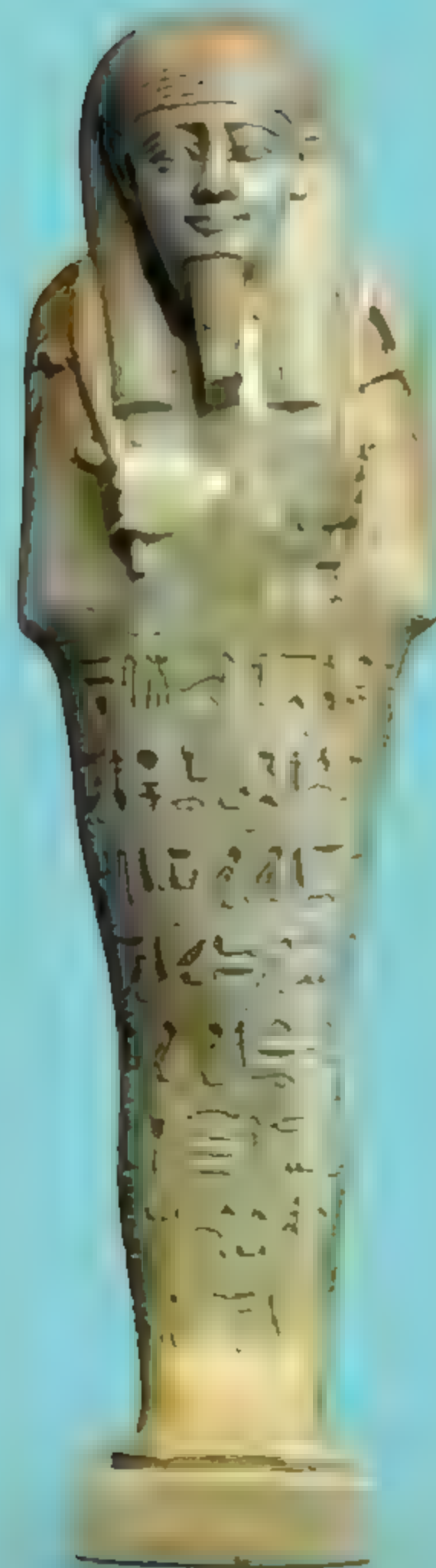
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Ushabti with the Name of Neferibresaneith

Egyptian, Saite Period (26th Dynasty, middle of the 6th century B.C.)

Light green faience

H: 18.6 cm (l:l)

Like (58) and (59) which are *ushabtis* of Neferibresaneith, a senior official of Dynasty 26, this statuette is in remarkable condition. Aside from minor chips on the nose and on the back pillar, it is virtually intact.

Although the proportions and the modeling are of excellent craftsmanship, the details of the face and the hieroglyphic signs are less sharp than those of the other examples mentioned, probably because the matrix in which the potter cast the piece had already been used to produce many statuettes.

See also (58) and (59).

PROVENANCE

Ex: R. Liechi (1934–2010) collection, Geneva, Switzerland; collected between the 1950's and the 1990's.

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Tombs of Saqqara during the Saite Period

STAMMERS, M., *The Elite Late Period Egyptian Tombs of Memphis* (Oxford, 2009), p. 210.

Ushabti of Imhotep

Egyptian, Saite Period (Dynasty 26, ca. 664–525 B.C.)

Light green faience

H: 23.5 cm (l:l)

This *ushabti* is complete and perfectly preserved. Like many others made at the time, it possesses very fine technical and artistic qualities. The long inscription comprised of nine horizontal lines contains excerpts from chapter 6b of the Egyptian Book of the Dead, and provides general information along with the titles of the deceased: a certain Imhotep, “Chance-lor of Lower Egypt born from Iset Weret [Isis the Great Goddess].”

The figure comes from a well-known series of funerary statuettes: the Egyptian Museum in Cairo alone houses thirty-two *ushabtis* that once belonged to the same royal official. According to J.-F. Aubert and L. Aubert, this group would have been discovered at Saqqara around 1860.

The iconography of this statuette is similar to that of many contemporary *ushabtis*. The variations between one type of figure and another are small, and mostly concern proportions, facial shape, text arrangement, and hair style (whether striated or smooth). The body of this *ushabti* resembles a mummy entirely wrapped in a shroud, with rather slender proportions: the arms, the outline of which is barely indicated, are crossed on the chest. In his hands, the man holds a hoe, a pick, and the rope of a seed sack suspended behind his left shoulder. A tripartite striped wig frames his broad, rounded face; a false beard, long and finely braided, adorns his chin.

This type of funerary statuette, called an *ushabti*, was most often made of blue faience. Stone, wood, or bronze specimens are rare and were reserved for high-ranking individuals. *Ushabtis* accompanied the deceased in the tomb and served as substitutes for him (or her) in performing required chores in the afterlife.

PROVENANCE

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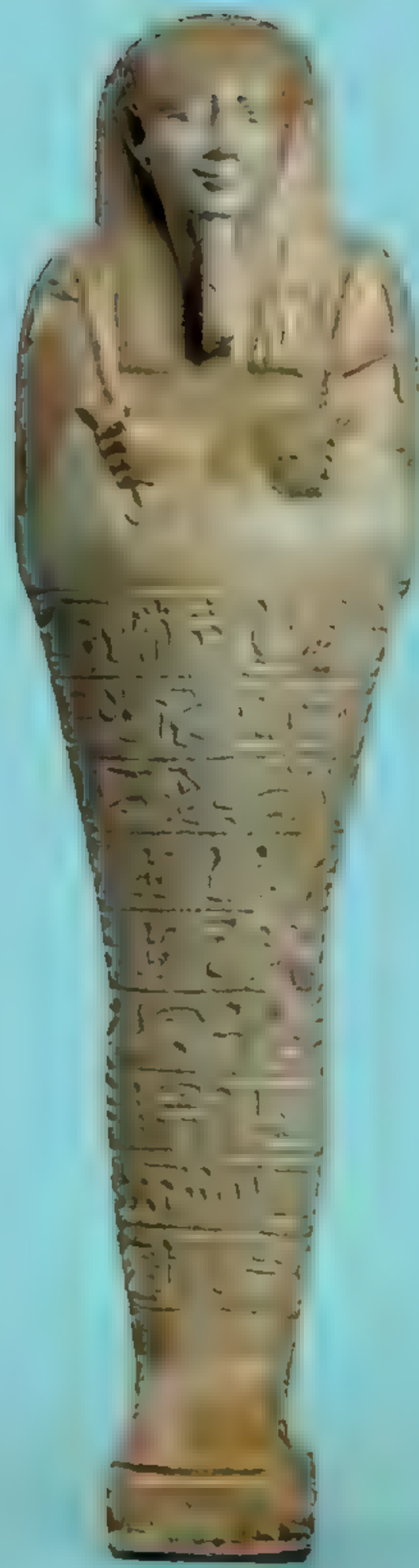
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Ushabti of Psammetichus

Egyptian, Saite Period (Dynasty 26, ca. 664–525 B.C.)

Light green faience

H: 19 cm (l:l)

Like many other statuettes made during the Saite Period, this *ushabti* possesses fine technical and artistic qualities. The long inscription (nine horizontal lines) on its body gives the name of the deceased and his titles, and includes an excerpt from chapter 6b of the Book of the Dead in which the deceased expresses his fear of farm chores and transportation of sand from the eastern to the western bank of the Nile. This *ushabti* belonged to a certain Psammetichus, a son of Merneith (beloved by Neith). The name is very common during Dynasty 26, during which it was borne by three kings. The title of the man, however, is more rare: “scribe-director of the food of the king of Upper Egypt.” The iconography of this statuette is similar to that of many contemporary *ushabtis*. The variations between one type of figurine and another are small and mostly concern proportions, facial shape, text arrangement, and hairstyle (whether striated or smooth). The body of this *ushabti* resembles a mummy entirely wrapped in a shroud, with rather slender proportions. The arms (here, the outline of the arms are finely modeled and well marked) are crossed on the chest; the hands hold a hoe, a pick, and the rope of the seed sack suspended behind his left shoulder. A tripartite striped wig frames the broad, rounded face. The man wears a divine, finely braided false beard. This type of funerary statuette, called an *ushabti*, was most often made of blue faience. Stone, wood, or bronze specimens are rare and were reserved for high-ranking individuals. *Ushabtis* accompanied the deceased in the tomb and served as substitutes for him (or her) in performing required chores in the afterlife.

PROVENANCE

Ex: collection of a German aristocratic family, collected before World War II.

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Sistrum in the Form of a *Naos*

Egyptian, late Dynasty 25 (first half of the 7th century B.C.)

Light green faience

H: 20.5 cm (1:1)

Despite the absence of the handle, now lost, and some minor chips, the piece is very well preserved. The condition of the surface, which retains its plastic qualities and beautiful light green color, is especially noteworthy. The *naos* has been reglued.

The sistrum (the modern name "sistrum" derives from the Greek σείστρον, *seistron*) is composed of two elements: (1) A, an icon head of the goddess Hathor, with identical pentagonal faces, is surrounded on four sides by thin locks of hair. The goddess, who wears a severe expression, has bovine ears, and her neck is adorned with a rich necklace strung with several rows of pearls. (2) A rectangular architectural element (it is actually a monumental door rather than a *naos*) constitutes the real musical part of the sistrum: movable bronze bars fitted with small metal disks would have once crossed the frame of the *naos* and produced a rhythmic sound. The base is decorated with a standing cobra (an uraeus), while the long spiraled stems on the sides are generally interpreted as Hathor's horns.

To the Egyptians, the sistrum was a percussion instrument chiefly used in the cults of Hathor and Isis. In the Late Period, it was also connected to other deities, sometimes even male ones. A complete sistrum has a cylindrical handle and an arched or *naos*-shaped upper part, pierced with holes into which bars and rings were inserted. According to popular beliefs, the rickling and rustling noises delighted the goddess Hathor, reminding her of the sounds of reeds and papyrus in the Delta, her birth region, and they were said to ease women in childbirth, dispelling evil from them.

Among the closest parallels for this sistrum is one in the Louvre, which is very similar from a morphological point of view. For stylistic reasons, it is dated to late Dynasty 25, a period to which the present example can also be attributed.

Faience sistrums in the form of a *naos* (called *seshesher* in ancient Egyptian) appeared in the Third Intermediate Period (probably beginning in Dynasty 22) and were very popular during the Late Period and the Ptolemaic era. The use of a material as attractive and as fragile as faience—and as unsuited to the manufacture of an object for daily use—leads to the classification of these sistrums among objects of symbolic worship rather than among true musical instruments: they were probably ex-votos dedicated in a shrine or placed in a tomb.

In terms of its artistic qualities and state of preservation, this sistrum is comparable to the best surviving instruments of this type.

PROVENANCE

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Aryballos Representing a Head in the Mouth of a Lion (Heracles with the Leontea?)

Greek (Naucratis?), late 7th–early 6th century B.C.

Very pale green and black faience

H. 5.1 cm (*enlarged*)

The aryballos is complete and in excellent condition, but the faience, whose wall is extremely thin, shows small holes in places (near the right ear of Heracles, under the right ear of the lion). The beige-gray faience is entirely furrowed with minor and irregular cracks, the origin of which remains unknown. The glaze, very light in color, retains its original luster, even underneath the vessel where the surface is white. **Many details on the neck, on the human face, and on the head of the lion were highlighted in black.**

The vessel, which is provided with a spout identical to those of traditional Greek aryballoi (even the painted decoration with the small tongues on the disk and the zigzag lines on the handle copy the same scheme), is globular in shape but with a flat bottom. On the front, the modeling in very low relief represents a bearded male head wearing a leontea, which immediately suggests the figure of Heracles, the most famous Greek hero. The iconography, however, differs from the usual figures, since the face of the hero is completely surrounded by the mouth of the lion, which seems to actually spit the man out.

For the rendering of both Heracles's face and the lion's head, the style is rather naive and characterized by somewhat vague, undifferentiated shapes and outlines. Similarly, the painted lines that highlight the details of the two figures are thick and imprecise. The hero, whose features are impersonal, has a long beard with a square outline when seen frontally but pointed when viewed in profile. The lion opens its mouth (revealing four fangs overpainted in black) out of which comes the bearded head, modeled in low relief. The details of the muzzle—nostrils, eyes, eyebrows, ears—partially highlighted in black, are visible on the upper aryballos, just below the spout. Black lines and zigzags marked by a low relief in the area under the ears suggest the mane of the lion.

Like (66), (65) and (67), this piece belongs to the series of faience aryballoi and plastic vases whose production is generally attributed to Rhodian and/or Naucratan workshops. The treatment of the subject—among the rarest in this example—is very unusual, so much so that one may wonder if the potter knew its mythological meaning and its iconographic tradition, which was being determined in the contemporary Greek world.

This example differs significantly from other faience aryballoi modeled in the shape of the head of Heracles, both technically (the faience is very light and the wall very thin) and stylistically (imprecise shapes, unclear details). Considering the provenance—its former owner, an Egyptologist, had worked in Egypt—it might reasonably be attributed to a Naucratan workshop.

See also (66).

PROVENANCE

Ex-collection of the Egyptologist Pierre Jodan Lacau (1873–1963), Paris, France; acquired from Greg Manning Galleries, Inc., New York, 1990.

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Aryballos in the Shape of a Hedgehog

Greek (Naucratis, Rhodes?), middle of the 6th century B.C.

Light blue faience

H: 6.4 cm (1:1)

As de from minor chips, the vessel is intact. The glaze partially retains its original luster, but it is effaced underneath the base (the paste is grayish white there). A number of details are highlighted in black: eyes, mouth, nostrils, eyebrows, ears, claws, spines above the forehead, and lines on the rim of the spout.

Technically and typologically, this piece can be classified in the same group (66) and (67). It possesses the same type of good-quality, thick-walled, sky blue faience with overpainted details, though there are differences in the treatment of certain features: the base is thicker, the hind legs are not shown, the body is thinner and more oval-shaped, the nostrils are more rounded, and no painted black marks appear on the body. The two hedgehog aryballoi certainly do not come from the same matrix.

See also (66).

PROVENANCE

Ex. Japanese private collection, 1980's.

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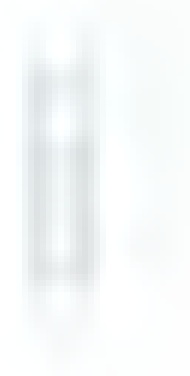
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Aryballos in the Shape of a Hedgehog

Greek (Naucratis, Rhodes?), middle of the 6th century B.C.

Light blue faience

H: 5 cm (*enlarged*)

Except for minor chips on the base and the neck, the *aryballos* is virtually intact. The beautiful light blue faience is partially effaced (including under the base, where it disappeared from the posterior half). Some details are highlighted in black: edge of the neck, marks on the body, **eyes, edge of the spines on the forehead.**

Like all contemporary Corinthian *aryballoi*, this small plastic vessel molded in the shape of a hedgehog is provided with a circular spout attached to a low, narrow neck, and with a small ribbon handle behind the spout (the empty area between the handle and the spout served for the suspension string).

The animal stands upright on its short legs, placed on a base whose profile is rectangular though rounded in the back. The well-rounded body is furrowed with intersecting diagonal lines that represent the spines. Two large horizontal ears frame a pointed muzzle and a mane of spines caps the forehead. These two features allow us to identify in this class of *aryballoi* the *hemiechinus auratus*, a species that lived in Egypt and in the eastern Mediterranean in antiquity; nowadays, it is found in many parts of southwestern Asia, in Mongolia, and in countries of the eastern Mediterranean.

Popular in ancient art from the earliest times (in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and the Aegean world) and uninterruptedly until the first millennium B.C., hedgehogs were not related to any particular deity, and even their meaning is not obvious. First (for Egyptians, in particular) they were considered stronger than death, and thus an important symbol of life and rebirth, since they lived in the inhospitable desert environment and were "reborn" each spring after hibernation. Second, their defensive abilities (they roll into balls and use their quills to protect themselves from predators), their supposed immunity to the poison of vipers, and the fact that snakes are part of the riddle would have given them a positive and protective role against evil and bad luck.

Images of these small rodents that lived in a neighboring environment could nevertheless simply reflect a popular theme and would not necessarily have conveyed a deeper significance than the representation of a very familiar and generally benevolent figure.

The Hellenic world was acquainted with faience as a material as early as the second millennium (see, for instance, the Minoan and Mycenaean Snake Goddesses), but the Greeks never really adopted it. Even in the Orientalizing and Archaic periods (mostly between the seventh and the mid-sixth century B.C., when Greeks "rediscovered" the eastern world), Greek craftsmen paid little attention to this material and used it to produce only a few types of small-sized objects.

The only important exception to this rule is represented by a series of small perfume vessels, such as globular *aryballoi* decorated with intersecting diagonal incisions and a number of plastic vases in the shape of animals or mythological figures (hedgehogs and fishes, etc., *hippalektron*, head of Heracles, etc.). The present piece is a perfect example of this series of vessels, which were very commercially successful, as evidenced by their wide distribution throughout the entire Archaic Greek world, from the Greek emporium of Naucratis in the Egyptian Nile Delta, to Rhodes and Cyprus, to the coastal cities of Asia Minor (eastern Greece), to the Greek mainland, to the colonies on the Black Sea (Panticapaeum), to the western colonies in southern Italy and Sicily, and up to the Iberian Peninsula. Most faience *aryballoi* and plastic vessels come from shrines or necropolises.

In the absence of recent and reliable archaeological data, it is impossible to confidently determine the place(s) of production, even though archaeologists have always thought that workshops would have been located at Naukratis and in cities on the island of Rhodes: the remarkable and highly accomplished blend of Greek (*aryballo*) and plastic vases were among the most significant forms of the Archaic Greek repertoire (some mythological subjects) and Egyptian elements (manufacturing technique, some subjects) nevertheless appears to be a clear indication to seek their origin in a major trade center (probably also in the production of perfumed essences), where craftsmen were in regular contact with both artistic traditions, even without knowing them in detail.

See also (65) and (67).

PROVENANCE

Ex: Joseph Chaya collection, Geneva, Switzerland, collected between 1950-1979

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Aryballos in the Shape of a Fish (Tilapia Nilotica)

Greek (Naucratis, Rhodes?), middle of the 6th century B.C.

Blue faience

H: 7 cm (1.1)

The tail, the ventral fin, and part of the right flank of the fish have been restored. Many details are painted in black on the surface of the faience (pupils, fins, edge of the spout), which only retains traces of its original luster under the muzzle.

The body—in the shape of a drop when seen horizontally—is a bit more rounded on the left than the right. The neck of the vessel sits on top of the fish's body, above its head and attached to the dorsal fin. The ventral fins would have served as small feet for the vessel. A lattice pattern incised on the body represents the scales. The eyes are circular and in low relief; the mouth is indicated by a bulge with a horizontal incision. Technically and typologically, this plastic vessel belongs to the same group as (66) et (65). The subject comes from the repertory of Egyptian iconography: the fish represented seems to be a *Tilapia nilotica*, a species abundant in the waters of the Nile. Because the female, after laying her eggs, carries them in her mouth until they hatch, this species was regarded as a symbol of rebirth and regeneration, as well as an example of birth without fertilization.

Vessels in the shape of fish are much rarer than those in the form of hedgehogs and come primarily from Rhodes.

See also (66).

PROVENANCE

Ex: American private collection, acquired between 1970 and 1989.

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Plastic Vase representing the Goddess of Animals

Greek (Naucratis, Rhodes?), end of the 7th–6th century B.C.

Light blue faience

H: 7.6 cm (*enlarged*)

The vessel is in a good state of preservation although it appears to have been partially repaired. The mouth, hand e and right foot of the figure are now lost and the rough-looking surface is covered with a light blue glaze.

This vase in the form of an elongated, slender alabastron, represents a young female figure with rather naïve, squat shapes and "Egyptianizing" facial features. She is standing upright on a square thin base and holds in her hands the raised tail of two lions (or panthers), a gesture that translates her power of dominion over animals. Wild cats, much smaller in size than the female figure, walk next to her. The young woman is dressed in a short-sleeved, long tunic, striped with diagonal lines which cover her entire body, except for her toes. Her thick long hair that reaches her shoulders, encircles her head like a skullcap composed of small vertical braids.

Like the contemporary Greek alabastra and arybal, this small plastic vase was provided with a circular mouth whose trace is still visible on the head of the woman and a ribbon handle attached to the hair. The suspension ring still visible on the hair, would have allowed the vessel to be suspended and/or transported.

In the Greek world, from the Archaic period especially, the female deity accompanied with two animals is most often named *Ποτνια Θηρών* (*Potnia Theron*) which means "mistress of wild animals", and most often refers to Artemis, the goddess of hunting and of the wild natural world. Her iconography is not uniform, since the *Potnia Theron* would appear winged or wingless, standing upright, walking in the company of various animals (usually wild cats, fantasy animals, deer, birds, etc.).

Popular in all Greek regions (Rhodes, Crete, eastern and continental Greece, western colonies) as well as in Etruria, she was a domineering and protective goddess of the natural world, linked to animal and plant fecundity and, according to some authors, to the chthonic world as well.

Like (66), (64), (65) and (67), this piece can probably be classified with the series of faience arybal and plastic vases whose production is generally attributed to workshops located at Naucratis and/or on the island of Rhodes. Although the subject is exceptional here, there are, in this group of objects, some plastic vases that are typologically similar and mostly represent the god Bes (seated and holding a gazelle, a monkey holding its baby, a girl seated or holding a gazelle, etc.).

PROVENANCE

Ex-Robin Symes collection; ex-Bell et Lynda Beierwaltes collection, acquired at R. Symes Ltd. in 1996

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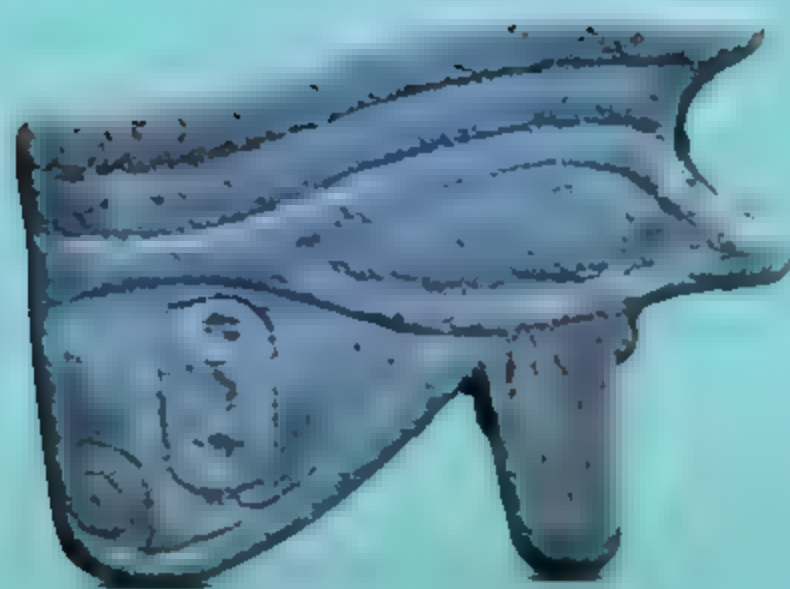
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Amulet Representing an *Udjat*-Eye with a Royal Cartouche

Egyptian, Saite Period (Dynasty 26, 570–526 B.C.)

"Egyptian blue" frit

L: 4.3 cm (*enlarged*)

This amulet, molded in a uniform, slightly friable pale blue frit, is complete and in a good state of preservation. The surface shows a superficial wear in places and/or is covered with a grayish patina. The hole for suspension was pierced horizontally at the eye level. The amulet, carved on both sides, represents a left eye and a right eye in low relief.

Under the right eye, the presence of a cartouche containing three imprinted hieroglyphic signs makes this small piece unusual. The cartouche reads *Khenem-b-Re*, one of the names of Amasis, the penultimate pharaoh of Dynasty 26. During his long and peaceful reign, Amasis endowed Egypt with great monuments and favored foreign trade, especially with areas in the Mediterranean region (Greece, Caria, and Lydia). Although he is known from Assyrian, Greek, and Persian texts, monuments bearing his name are rare because of the destruction caused by the conquest of Egypt by the Persian king Cambyses (525 B.C.).

The *udjat*-eye was a prophylactic symbol par excellence of ancient Egypt. It appears on a great variety of objects utilized by all classes of the population. A hybrid that combines a human eye (conjunctiva, pupil, and eyebrow) and markings that adorn the eye of a hawk, this amulet evokes the idea of fullness and of the integrity of the reconstituted body of the deceased—an allusion to the legend of the eye of Horus, which was snatched away during the battle with Seth, and finally recovered by Thoth. The presence of the name Amasis indicates that this piece could have been part of a collection of funerary amulets belonging to a member of the pharaoh's court.

See also (80).

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Statuette-Amulet of Re-Horakhty

Egyptian, Saite Period (Dynasty 26, ca. 7th–6th century B.C.)

Light green faience

H: 6 cm (*enlarged*)

This statuette is intact. The glaze was less well formed in places during the firing process or was slightly damaged (under the base and near the pillar).

Despite its miniature size, the artistic qualities of this figurine — its proportions, careful modeling of the body, and richly incised details, especially on the head — place it among the most remarkable of small artworks. The god is personified by a hawk-headed man. He stands upright on a small base in the slightly stiff position common to all Egyptian deities: left leg placed forward, arms hanging down alongside the body, torso and head frontal, gaze directed forward. He wears only a striated long cloth and his usual headgear, composed of the solar disk and the uraeus. In the back, the statuette is reinforced by a long pillar that extends to the height of the disk and is drilled with a suspension hole at the level of Re's chest.

A major Egyptian god embodying the sun, Re was worshiped throughout the country, but mainly in Heliopolis, in the Delta. Depending on the time of the day, he would appear in three different guises: as Khepri, the scarab-headed man, at sunrise; as Horakhty, the personification of the sun at its zenith; and as Atum, in the form of an old man, at sunset, just before his evening disappearance. He was most often represented in the form of the hawk-headed Re-Horakhty.

Amulets of this type were widespread in non-royal tombs from the Third Intermediate Period and were placed on the chests of mummies. According to C. Andrews, they offered the owners an eternal rebirth, similar to that of the sun, which reappears every morning.

PROVENANCE

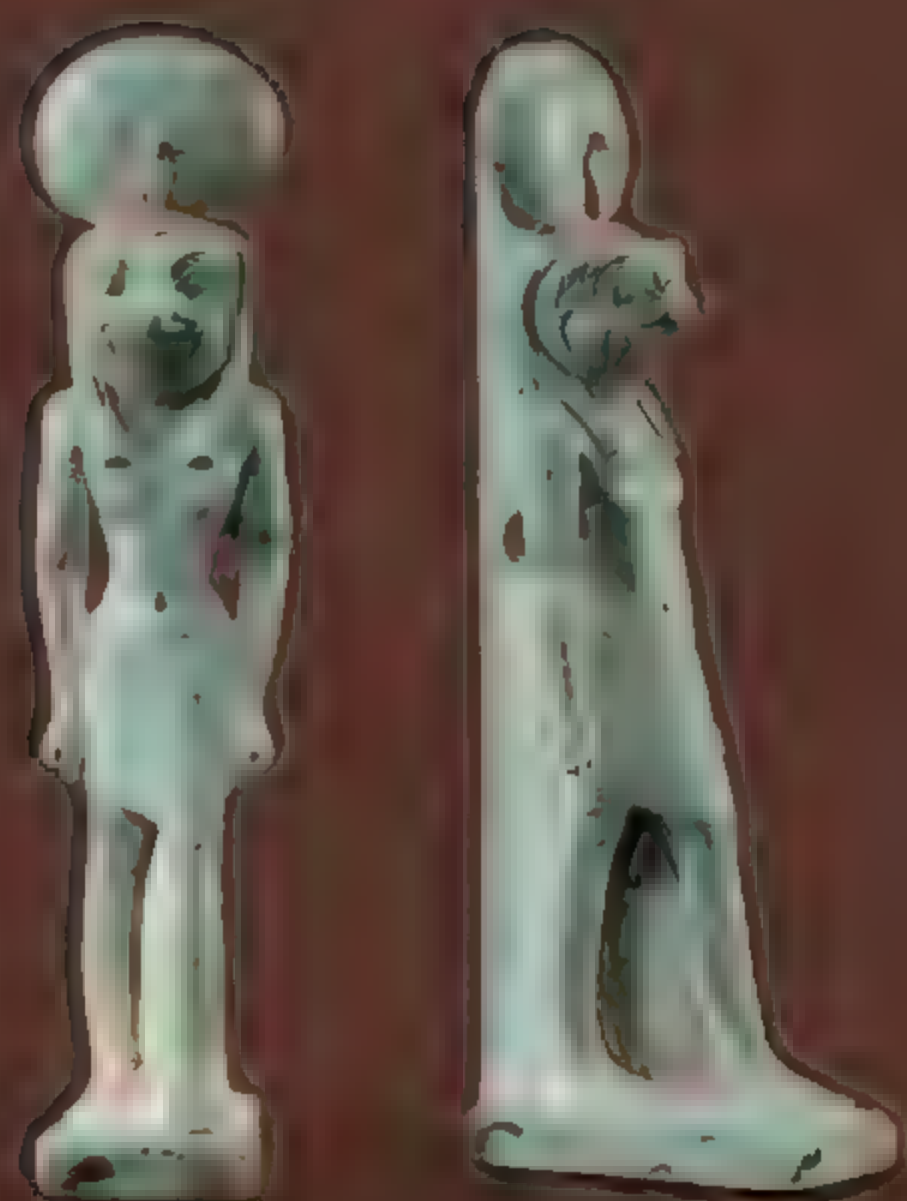
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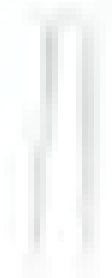
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Statuette Representing Isis *lactans*

Egyptian, Late Period (ca. 7th–4th century B.C.)

Light blue and yellow faience

H: 7.2 cm (*enlarged*)

The lower statuette is lost and small fragments appear to have been restored on the right side of the hair. The blue glaze retains its original luster, while the yellow wig (lead glaze?) looks matte.

Despite these damages, the figurine shows remarkable artistic qualities. The young woman, with her delicate features and noble bearing, displays a slight “smile,” a distinctive feature of the statuettes of this period.

The iconography here recalls that of Isis images, which were widespread in Egyptian art during the first millennium B.C. The goddess, who can be identified by the throne crowning her head, was placed on a seat that extended into a back pillar. Her arms are bent: the right to the chest, offering her opposite breast to Horus; and the left, which served as a headrest for her son. Her body is wrapped in a tight-fitting tunic, and she wears a tripartite wig. The uraeus, clearly visible in the center of her forehead, emphasizes her divine status.

According to Egyptian mythology, Isis conceived with her magical powers a posthumous son of her husband Osiris killed by Seth. She gave birth to the child, Horus, and raised him in the marshes of the Delta, hidden and protected by the high papyrus plants.

Isis was very popular from the Third Intermediate Period onward and became a universal figure of Egyptian (and later Mediterranean) mythology because of her roles as a faithful and loving wife and as an ideal mother, as well as because of her knowledge of the magical and medical world.

The iconography of the seated mother nursing her child dates back to the Old Kingdom and became very popular in later Western art, serving as a model for depictions of the Virgin suckling the infant Jesus.

PROVENANCE

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Amulet of the God Thoth in the Form of a Seated Baboon

Egyptian, Late Period (6th–4th century B.C.)

Light blue faience

H: 3.8 cm (*enlarged*)

The statuette is virtually intact. The surface retains its original light blue color and the satin finish that is a distinctive feature of faience objects during this period. The suspension ring that allowed the figure to be worn as an amulet is situated between the shoulders of the baboon. **The creature rests on a thin base, the outline of which is curved at the back and straight in the front.**

The animal places its hands on its raised knees and gazes directly forward in a perfectly natural pose for this species of monkey. Despite the miniature size, the accurately observed and meticulously rendered anatomical details, especially in the baboon's head, are noteworthy: the muzzle is long and finely drawn, the eyes are deeply set, the brows form a thick edge. Except for the muzzle and the gluteal muscles, **the body is entirely covered with regularly incised vertical lines that indicate fur.**

The finely modeled body has slender proportions that suggest the agility of the animal. The legs of the baboon are slightly spread, revealing the genitals; the tail coils around the right thigh. Incisions indicate the fingers and the toes—even the thumbs (for both hands and feet) are differentiated.

This statuette depicts an animal well known in Egyptian statuary: the cynocephalic baboon, which was found in a comparable form as early as the Predynastic Period. Despite the absence of specific attributes, the figure can confidently be identified with the god Thoth. A lunar deity represented as a baboon or an ibis, Thoth was worshipped primarily at Hermopolis. His skills were unique since he oversaw all intellectual activities. He was the master of writing, thought, and language, as well as the god who counted, handled numbers, calculated time, and regulated the calendar. For this reason, he coordinated the distribution of the offerings between the various gods. He was also responsible for counting the sins of the deceased when they arrived in front of Osiris in the afterlife. As a sort of divine secretary, he possessed qualities that made him a great magician and healer. As the inventor of writing, Thoth was considered the master and patron of scribes, particularly in his cynocephalic form. It was most likely the men who were engaged as scribes who would have worn the numerous baboon-shaped amulets that appeared in tombs of the Ramesside period. Thoth amulets became even more widespread during the first millennium B.C.

See also (77).

PROVENANCE

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Statuette of a Lion Goddess (Sekhmet?)

Egyptian, Late Period or Ptolemaic Period (ca. 7th–1st century B.C.)

Light blue faience

H: 9.2 cm (*enlarged*)

The statuette is unfortunately in poor condition, since the lower body, the left arm, the right forearm, and the crown are lost. The rough-looking beige paste was covered with a greenish blue glaze, some traces of which remain in the eyes and on the right flank. The holes on the head probably served to attach the ears and the crown. The eyes were inlaid. An ancient inventory number (GR 768) is visible under the dorsal pillar. With the crown, this image would have probably exceeded twenty centimeters in height.

The regular lower edge of the chest, which does not seem to have been accidentally broken, and the presence of a dark material under the torso (bitumen used as glue?) might indicate that the statuette was composed of two elements modeled separately and glued according to the iconography of the lion-headed goddess, it can be suggested that the figure was standing upright or seated on a throne (the dorsal pillar would then become the seat back).

The figure represented is a hybrid with the body of a young-looking woman, with slender shapes in a skin-tight tunic, but with a feline head. The left arm was probably hanging down along the side, while the right arm, slightly bent, is drawn back in front of the body. With the right hand, the stump of which is still in place, the figure held an *udjat*-eye, represented in relief on her belly. She wears a tripartite wig that reaches her shoulders and her back, but which very naturally turns into a semicircular mane on the front. The long and thin feline muzzle, which replaces the human face, shows fully detailed, realistic linear outlines. The ears were placed on the bald skull, and in the central hole was a crown whose nature cannot be determined.

On the pillar/seat back, the following hieroglyphic signs are inscribed in a somewhat summary and now barely legible manner: "Life, protection, favor, all."

In the absence of more specific inscriptions or attributes, the various feline-headed goddesses who filled the imagination of ancient Egyptians cannot be precisely identified. The archetypal lion goddess of Egyptian mythology was Sekhmet, most often assimilated to Bastet, but whose iconography also suggests that of other figures (such as Tefnut, Pakhet, and Mut).

This statuette, however, can reasonably be identified as the dreadful goddess Sekhmet, who was very popular in the Egyptian world, especially from the late Bronze Age onward. In her dangerous and dreadful form, or in her mild and gentle aspect of Bastet, she alternately appeared as a she-cat or as, probably the case here, as a lioness, since her dreadful nature always slept within her. Mistress of all evil and of the plagues that she commanded, she also symbolized healing and was the patroness of doctors and priests who knew the art of healing; she bestowed special protection on the family home, women in childbirth, and small children. Her protective and positive appearance is accentuated here by the presence of the *udjat*-eye, the amulet related to the legend of the Eye of Horus (snatched by Seth, the eye was reassembled and given back by Thoth to the son of Osiris), which promised health and integrity to its owner.

Faience (or "Egyptian blue" frit) statuettes of such size are rather rare.

See also (44) and (45)

PROVENANCE

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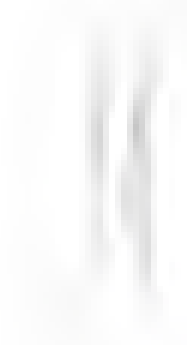
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Amulet in the Form of a Crocodile Attacking a Snake

Egyptian, Late Period (Dynasty 26–30, ca. 7th–4th century B.C.)

Light blue faience

L: 7 cm (*enlarged*)

The statuette is virtually intact and the glaze is largely preserved. Green traces still visible on the tail would have marked the scales and imitated the skin of the reptile. The presence of a small hole pierced behind the lower jaw indicates that this piece was an amulet to be worn as a pendant.

This figurine differs from the usual type in that the reptile is not placed on the base (only the neck and the lower jaw are equipped with a small supporting slab). Since the legs are slightly folded and raised, the contact with the ground is provided by a section of the oval, flattened abdomen, specially arranged. Thus, seen from the side, the animal appears suspended as if it were floating in the water (Has it been in the Nile hunting the snake that it holds in its mouth?)

The figurine is remarkably realistic, particularly in the sinuous shape of the outlines, which recalls the elegant and hydrodynamic motion of the reptile and in the finely modeled volumes of the body (tail, abdomen, neck). The muzzle is flat but rounded with globular eyes and hollow nostrils. In its mouth, the crocodile grips its prey: a coiled snake whose head appears on the right side of the jaw, between the sharp fangs of the hunter. The iconography of this pendant amulet is very rare, maybe unique. As a counterpart to the many contemporary magical formulas, the piece probably had an apotropaic function, serving to protect its owner against crocodile attacks.

See also (75).

PROVENANCE

Acquired on the French art market in 2004

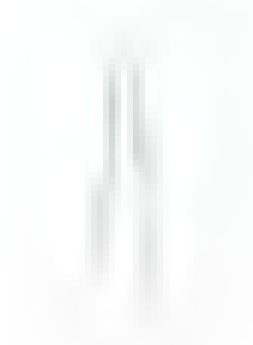
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Statuette of a Crocodile

Egyptian, Late Period (6th–4th century B.C.)

Light blue faience

L: 10.2 cm (*enlarged*)

The statuette of a crocodile, reglued at the neck, is in excellent condition, with the tail and head retaining ample traces of glaze. The reptile's tail and feet are placed firmly on the ground. Its head is raised, and the creature appears to be poised, waiting for just the right moment to strike its prey. **The undulating outline of the flat base follows the form of the reptile.**

The crocodile's powerful body is finely modeled, with a rounded back and a slightly curved tail. The anatomy is rendered in great detail—differentiated scales, shape of the muzzle, clearly visible fangs despite the closed mouth—but this sometimes becomes a pretext to decoratively embellish the statuette. For instance, the legs are in the shape of chevrons terminating in a volute or an ellipse. The lower base is decorated with two joined lotuses flanked by two scarabs.

Despite the fear they inspired, crocodiles were familiar animals to ancient Egyptians, who knew they were very common along the Nile's banks and in the marshes of the Delta. Because of their behavior, they had an ambivalent role in religion: on the one hand, they were feared and fought because of the constant danger they represented for men and cattle; on the other hand, their way of life connected them to the cycle of the sun since they would disappear into the water at night and re-emerge in the morning, resting on the riverbanks all day. Thus, they became a symbol of rebirth and fecundity. This symbolism helps to explain the large number of crocodile figurines and amulets, most of which date from the Third Intermediate Period and had an apotropaic and/or votive function.

Sobek (Suchos), god of water, floods, and fertility, appeared in the form of a crocodile or of a crocodile-headed man. In the shrines dedicated to this deity, reptiles were kept alive and, after their death, mummified and buried.

See also (74).

PROVENANCE

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Amulet of a Sow (the Goddess Reret)

Egyptian, Late Period or Ptolemaic Period (ca. 7th–1st century B.C.)

Light green faience

D: 2.7 × 1.8 cm (*enlarged*)

Aside from the right ear, now lost, the amulet is intact. The suspension ring is situated on top of the sow's back.

The animal is standing upright, walking slowly with its snout touching the ground as if searching for food. A realistic representation of the highest quality and typologically close to contemporary images, this sow has an elongated snout and a slender, seemingly agile body furrowed with long horizontal lines that indicate thick bristles. The legs are relatively thin and straight. The small, rounded tail is practically speaking the only feature the animal shares with a modern-day pig. The presence of many udders, depicted as small knobs under the abdomen, clearly indicates that this is a female.

Swine did not benefit from a very positive image in ancient Egypt. Swineherds were excluded from sanctuaries, and though pigs were not banned (as they would be later), they were generally considered to be unclean animals; nevertheless, their meat was consumed from prehistoric times on. Domesticated as early as the Old Kingdom, swine are depicted in farming scenes that were part of painted and carved tomb decoration, in which they were among the flocks used by shepherds to push seeds into the soil.

If males were banned as an evil incarnation (they were Seth animals), females with a big abdomen and swollen udders were endowed with positive powers, as nurturers of several young simultaneously.

Having noticed that sows sometimes ate their offspring, Egyptians had linked them to Nut, the goddess of the sky: at dawn, Nut swallowed the stars, and in the evening, she swallowed the sun, but she alternately rebirthed them all after twelve hours. The mythological associations to sows do not stop there, since figures as important as Isis and Taweret were sometimes connected to them.

Referring, therefore, to ideas of regeneration, fecundity and protection of motherhood and newborns, amulets representing a sow were widespread primarily during the Late Period. At the new year, during the Nile flood, these figures were offered as gifts and wishes for prosperity in the coming year.

PROVENANCE

Ex: Félix Bienaimé Feraudent (1819–1907) collection, France

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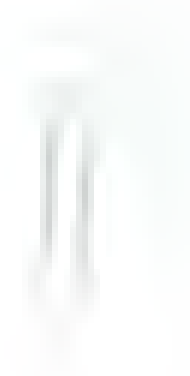
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Statuette-Amulet of Thoth with the Head of an Ibis

Egyptian, Late Period or Ptolemaic Period (6th–1st century B.C.)

Light green faience

H: 11.6 cm (*enlarged*)

The statuette is in good condition, but the beak has been reconstructed. The surface of the faience still partially retains its original turquoise green color and matte/satin appearance, but it is also covered with a slight beige layer due to the storage conditions at the site.

The feet are placed on a rectangular rather thick pedestal, while a vertical pillar that reaches to shoulder height reinforces the back of the statuette. The sculptor did not hollow out the space between the legs. The two cylinders placed at ear level were pierced vertically for suspension from a cord, which strongly suggests that this figurine was intended to serve as an amulet.

Despite the absence of specific attributes, the statuette can be identified confidently as a representation of Thoth in his human form with the head of an ibis. The god appears as a young man in the prime of life, standing upright in a hieratic pose: the arms, attached to the body, hang down at his sides along the hips and thighs, the left leg strides forward, the head is straight. Thoth is entirely nude, but he wears a striped tripartite wig, which falls on the shoulders and on the upper back. The human face is completely replaced by the head of the ibis, with the long curved beak and the neck provided with long horizontal lines that suggest the esophagus of the bird. The image turns almost grotesque despite its natural position and remarkable artistic qualities. The precise, finely modeled and almost soft shapes of chest, abdomen, and thighs require a date for this statuette in the 1st millennium B.C.—and more precisely, in the Late Period (or even the Ptolemaic period). A lunar deity depicted as a baboon or an ibis, Thoth was worshiped primarily at Hermopolis. His skills were unique, since he was charged with all intellectual activity. He was the master of writing, thought, and language, but also the god who counted, handled numbers, calculated time, and regulated the calendar. For this reason, he coordinated the distribution of the offerings between the various gods. A sort of divine secretary, Thoth was responsible for counting the sins of the deceased when they arrived in the afterlife in front of Osiris. His qualities made him a great magician and healer. In addition, as the inventor of writing, Thoth was considered the master and patron of scribes, especially in his cynocephalic form.

Amulets depicting the god with a human body and an ibis head appeared during the New Kingdom (an example made of gold was placed around the neck of the mummy of Tutankhamun). They remained very popular throughout the first millennium B.C., with an obvious funerary connotation.

See also (72).

PROVENANCE

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Ornament in the Shape of a Cobra

Egyptian, Late Period or Ptolemaic Period (7th–1st century B.C.)

Light blue faience

L: 11.5 cm (l:l)

This ornament was reassembled from two fragments, but it is in a remarkably good state of preservation. Except for minor superficial chips, the glaze, uniform in appearance and color, largely retains its original luster.

Although no system allowing the attachment of the object to its support is visible, this ornament probably would have been suspended by small tenons located in the curves of the body or just under the head of the snake (the smooth, flat posterior part of the ornament might have been easily placed in a preformed hollowed surface). The nature of the ancient support is unknown, but similar ornaments were most often mounted on pieces of furniture, such as wooden chests. They would also decorate wooden sarcophagi or pedestals for a funeral boat, etc. Besides their decorative nature, they also had an apotropaic purpose.

This example, which is distinguished for its outstanding artistic quality as well as for its unusual size, depicts a cobra without uraeus but with a swollen hood seen frontally, while the head is represented in profile. Formally, the long, thin body with its five curves could be inscribed in a rectangle. Linear incisions (net patterns / lines) differentiate the scales of the snake on the belly. The small head, the round eyes, and the color and appearance of the faience justify a dating to the Late Period or Ptolemaic era.

Widely represented in the fauna of ancient Egypt, snakes were both feared and venerated, as in many civilizations. Although they represented a real danger in the daily life of Egyptians because of their fatal bites, the aversion to these animals was also based on the attacks led several times a day by the mythical serpent Apophis against the solar boat, constantly threatening its race in the sky.

At the same time, snakes were a symbol of rebirth, especially when they were coiled, resembling a never-ending body. Images of cobras were also used to dispel evil enemy forces and thus became a protector of the sun and of the pharaoh (uraeus) as well as a popular subject for a large number of pendant amulets, especially from the first millennium B.C. onward.

PROVENANCE

Found in Lebanon, near Tyre; acquired by M. Sleiman Aboutaam in Beirut before 1980.

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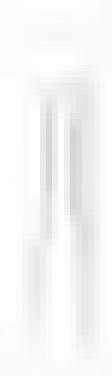
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Amulet of an Anepigraphic Scarab

Egyptian, Late Period, ca. 6th–4th century B.C.

Dark blue frit

Dim: 5.9 × 3.8 cm (*enlarged*)

The amulet is intact, but a dark brownish gray patina covers its surface.

The scarab is placed on a flat, elliptical base; the bottom has no inscription. The six holes that pierce the base would probably have served to fasten the insect to a net of faience beads wrapping a mummy (holes near the head and on the lower part) and to provide it with a pair of spread wings (four holes on the sides, two on the left and two on the right).

Characterized by stylized shapes, this beetle is flat with slight volumes and a few elegant lines that mark the essential details of the anatomy, such as the wing sheaths, the clypeus (head), and the legs.

Very common in the desert, the scarab was extremely popular in the religious beliefs of ancient Egypt. A sacred animal from the Thinite period, it metaphorically became the symbol of the rising sun, as it was thought to push the solar disk with its hind legs in the same way that real scarabs roll balls of dung in which they lay their eggs before burying them. At the same time, it was a symbol of rebirth and regeneration, and was read as the ideogram *Kheper*, which means “to become.”

With or without inscription, made of faience, of stone, or of other materials, scarabs represented for men an amulet that breathed life. There were no mummies without scarabs sewn or placed on their chest. The scarabs were supposed to prevent the heart from testifying against the deceased during the weighing of souls at the time of death.

See also (35).

PROVENANCE

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Amulet Representing an *Udjat*-Eye

Egyptian, Late Period (6th–4th century B.C.)

Blue faience

L: 4.1 cm (*enlarged*)

The amulet is complete and virtually intact. The turquoise blue glaze enriched with details in black (eyebrows, iris) largely retains its original luster. The eye was produced in an openwork mold, but the posterior face is smooth, flat, and undecorated. The amulet's two suspension rings are situated on the eyebrow.

Although the piece shows the usual features for its type (iconographically, *udjat*-eyes take the form of a human eye seen frontally—generally the right eye—together with a curved line under the eye id, an anatomical element of the eye of the falcon), its graceful linear execution nevertheless conveys a sense of charm and elegance.

According to Egyptian mythology, Horus would have lost his left eye in the battle against his uncle Seth, who divided it into six parts that he threw into the Nile. But the god Thoth found the eye, restored it, and gave back Horus his integrity. Hence the meaning of this amulet, which had a magical purpose linked with the idea of restoring the integrity of the body after death.

This falcon, one of the most important in ancient Egypt, was represented on countless and varied supports, such as sarcophagi and pectorals, as well as boat prows, thereby enabling the boats to steer their course more easily.

See also (69).

PROVENANCE

Ex: R. Liechti (1934–2010) collection, Geneva, Switzerland, collected between the 1950's and the 1990's, acquired in Geneva.

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Support in the Shape of a Column Capital

Egyptian, Late Period or Ptolemaic period (ca. 7th–1st century B.C.)

Light greenish blue faience (?)

H: 7.2 cm (1:1)

The object is complete. The surface of the faience is covered with a brownish patina that partially hides the color of the glaze (which was probably in the usual shades of greenish blue).

This support – probably molded on a core that burned during the firing process – is hollow and shows an elliptical opening in the lower part, while seven circular holes are visible at the other end, the outline of which is arched. Both sides are similar.

This somewhat triangular piece imitates in miniature the shape of a column capital, although it is almost flat. The decoration in very low relief represents the palmette – a plant motif that was very widespread in Egyptian art. The delicately stylized work is characterized by nuanced modeling, carefully rendered details (e.g., fronds), and remarkable concern for symmetry.

This piece would have been the intermediate element of a fan mounted on a wooden handle (or a handle made of some other perishable material). It would have served as a support for bird feathers which were inserted in the holes pierced in the upper part. Waved rhythmically, they would refresh their bearers in the dry hot climate of ancient Egypt. Among the best examples of fans that have survived into modern times is the perfectly preserved specimen found in the tomb of Tutankhamun, now in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo.

The palmette motif has been widely used by potters, especially from the early New Kingdom and into the first millennium for the manufacture of pendant amulets whose meaning would have been linked to fertility and regeneration. Compartmented boxes with flat lids in the shape of palmettes, whose motif in relief is related to the decoration of this support, date to the Late Period and the Ptolemaic period.

PROVENANCE

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Spindle-Shaped Bead with an Image of Osiris, Nephthys, and Isis (?)

Egyptian, Late Period or Ptolemaic Period (6th–1st century B.C.)

Light blue faience

H: 5.8 cm (*enlarged*)

This bead, larger than average in size and perfectly preserved despite superficial wear, shows a series of three deities. Their shouettes, as well as the other elements of the decoration, are simply incised. Two friezes of vertical lines frame the composition at the top and bottom of the bead.

The figure of Osiris, preceded by hieroglyphs indicating the words “Osiris forever,” follows the traditional iconography of the god: he is mummy-form and holds a was scepter in one hand and a flageolum in the other; he wears the *atef* crown and a circular necklace with a small counterweight. He is followed by Nephthys, who can be identified by her name written above her head (a basket and a house stacked one on top of the other); the goddess, who holds a scepter adorned with a papyrus umbel and the *ankh* sign of life, wears a long wig and an uraeus on the forehead. The last figure can probably be identified with Isis wearing the crown of Hathor; like her sister in front of her, she holds the *ankh* cross while she raises her right hand in adoration. Related groups of deities making the same gesture as Isis are well attested in the iconography of royal tombs, mostly from the New Kingdom onward.

Similarly shaped beads, pierced lengthwise, are well known in Egyptian jewelry and were produced in different materials (faience, but also cornelian and other semiprecious stones); often called *souweret*, they were generally painted on wooden sarcophagi of the Middle Kingdom, where they can be seen suspended from a necklace and surrounded by two spherical beads.

Like this example, some of them are decorated with mythological scenes, while others, more frequent, bear incised (or painted) inscriptions indicating the name of the deceased and/or of a king or a deity. Their purpose is still unclear, but these beads would have been linked to the name of the deceased that they would have had to protect.

PROVENANCE

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Alabastron

Egyptian, Late Period (Persian Period, Late 6th–4th century B.C.)

"Egyptian blue" frit

H: 20.7 cm (I:I)

The vessel is complete and virtually intact; only a vertical crack is visible along the body. The matte porous surface is covered with a light grayish brown patina.

The form is classic: the body has a profile of an oval curve and a rounded base (the vase does not stand on its own and does not have handles) with a small cylindrical neck and a broad circular mouth whose upper side is inclined toward the inside to avoid wasting the contents. Such an elegant, perfectly executed shape required no decoration, except for three incised lines (on the shoulder, lower mouth, and rim), nothing interrupts the flowing line of the elongated, slender profile.

The word now used to indicate the form of this vessel derives from the ancient Greek αλαβαστρον and refers to "alabaster," the yellowish white-veined translucent stone of which many Egyptian examples have been found. In the ancient world, the alabastron was one of the main types of pottery intended for the transport and the storage of perfume and cosmetics used for personal hygiene. According to notes inscribed on some Hellenistic pieces, these vessels contained various materials of plant or origin such as extracts of myrrh, iris, cinnamon, cypress resin, etc. Made in Egypt according to some scholars and in Phoenicia according to others, these vessels were certainly spread via the Phoenician world to other parts of the Mediterranean, where they were adopted in the early centuries of the first millennium B.C. Alabastra existed in many formal versions—with squat and low or elongated and thin body with or without small handles, with flat or rounded base, with flat or flared lip, etc.—and in many materials (stone, glass, terracotta, gray or black "bucchero," metal, etc.).

For the manufacture of this form, the use of faience is relatively rare, and even more rare are specimens made of frit. The closest parallel for the present vessel is one from the former Norbert Schimmel collection, a piece that is squatter in shape and lacks a circular rim. The Phoenix Gallery example can be dated to the early fifth century B.C. (during the Persian domination of Egypt) by a cartouche inscribed with the name of Darius (550–486 B.C.) in hieroglyphic signs located between the handles, which are modeled in the shape of lion protomes.

PROVENANCE

Acquired by M. Sleman Aboutaam in London in 1981 and then in the family collection.

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Hippopotamus

Egyptian, Late Period (Persian Period, 6th–4th century B.C.)

“Egyptian blue” frit

L: 18 cm (l:l)

Except for minor cracks, the statuette is complete and in remarkable condition. The surface is slightly worn, but still shows many traces of modeling and polishing; after having modeled the hippopotamus, the potter finished the figure like a sculptor, by rounding the volumes and incising many anatomical elements. **No trace of painted details is visible.**

Typologically, this piece continues the series of hippos in the round that has a very long tradition in Egyptian iconography and which reached its acme with the famous funerary figurines of the Middle Kingdom (see (2) and (3)), but which is also attested with many examples of the second half of the 2nd millennium. In more recent times (1st millennium) this pachyderm is, however, generally associated with the goddess Thoris (see (47, 48, 49, 50)), while statuettes of this type and size seem to disappear. Faience figurines, smaller in size but representing this animal, appeared between the 7th and the 6th century in the iconographic panorama of the Eastern Greek world, certainly **influenced by Egyptian art and provided with suspension rings, they might have served as amulets.**

Although this animal can confidently be identified as a hippopotamus, the proportions and shape of certain parts of its body (the legs are rather short, and the neck is thin and long, while the modeling of the body and croup more faithfully represents a hippo) are different from the statuettes of the Middle Kingdom, because the artist might have wanted to depict a baby or a young animal, rather than an adult; he **thus copied a famous subject, but treated it in a particular way.**

The use of frit for the manufacture of large-sized statuettes or vessels (see (83)) is uncommon, but attested during the Late Period by a number of objects, among which may be included images of Bes (Cleveland Museum of Art, Miho Museum, in Japan) or the hollow figure of a lion (Louvre), whose head only is preserved; it would have been part of a rhyton and reached the same size as our example.

After the Persian conquest in 525 B.C., the Achaemenid kings became the new pharaohs and transformed Egypt into a satrapy (with Cyprus and Phoenicia, Egypt formed the sixth satrapy of the Persian Empire). Historically, this was a turbulent period, but it was artistically very rich, characterized both by the mixture of foreign styles, like in the Saite period, and by a return to the traditions of the past, perfectly exemplified by this hippo.

PROVENANCE

Acquired by M. Sleiman Aboutaam, in London, in 1981, and in the family collection since then.

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Dish Decorated with a Pair of Lions

Egyptian, Late Period (Persian Period, 5th–4th century B.C.)

Light and dark blue faience

D: 12.6 cm (l:l)

This beautiful object, which originally belonged to a pair of small dishes from the former Fouquet collection (the other piece is in the Louvre), was found in 1884 on the site of ancient Leontopolis, or City of Lions in the Nile Delta. During the first excavations on the site, the “lion cache” more than eighty pieces decorated with leonine motifs, was discovered. The collection seems to have been part of a temple deposit, or *havssa* (perhaps dedicated to a lion god) into which worshipers placed worn-out sacred objects for burial. This small vessel therefore probably originally had a ritual function.

Leonine deities have been part of the Egyptian pantheon from the earliest dynasties. One of them acquired particular local importance at Leontopolis (modern-day Tell el-Muqdam) during the Third Intermediate Period. Mahes, incarnated in the form of a lion or a lion-headed man, Son of Sekhmet or Bastet, who were a so ferine gods. Mahes was closely associated with the sun god Re, whom he helped in his battles against the serpent Apopis, a god of war, he assisted the pharaoh in battle.

Mahes appeared in Egypt in the Middle Kingdom and could have been of foreign origin, perhaps Nubian.

Archaeological evidence in Leontopolis suggests that a temple was dedicated to him in the eastern part of the site. Unfortunately, the building was destroyed; most of the stone blocks were removed and reused, which makes the dating of his temple uncertain. Although the Mahes cult was centered in Leontopolis, other sites were devoted to him, including a temple built by Osorkon III at Bubastis. A representation of the god appears in the temple of Debod, which was moved to Madrid before the construction of the Aswan High Dam. A cult was also dedicated to Mahes in Nubia.

Beautifully cleaned, this dish still retains ample traces of blue glaze, visible on the entire body of the vessel. The mane of both lions was painted in darker blue. It is provided with a central shallow circular hollow (probably intended to contain the offerings for the deity) while the wide rim supports two statuettes of lions arranged symmetrically. The lower outline forms a regular curve.

Unlike the images of sphinxes, which are generally depicted lying with their legs outstretched in front of them, the lions represented here are shown in a more natural manner and in a moment of repose: their bodies are relaxed and protrude beyond the rim of the vessel, dangling down. The proportions are elegant and elongated but correct; the manes, the details of the muzzle and the rendering of the muscles and ribs are sculpted in a very realistic and accurate way despite the small size of the object. The tails form decorative J-shaped curves along the rim. The two animals look at each other while being simultaneously turned in opposite directions. In Egyptian art, this pose is documented in earlier representations.

Like the other objects of the D. M. Fouquet collection, and for stylistic and typological reasons, this vessel can be dated to the period that ranges between the Late Period and the Ptolemaic era.

PROVENANCE

Ex-Dr. Daniel Marie Fouquet collection, Cairo. Found at Tell el-Muqdam (Leontopolis) in 1884.

PUBLISHED IN

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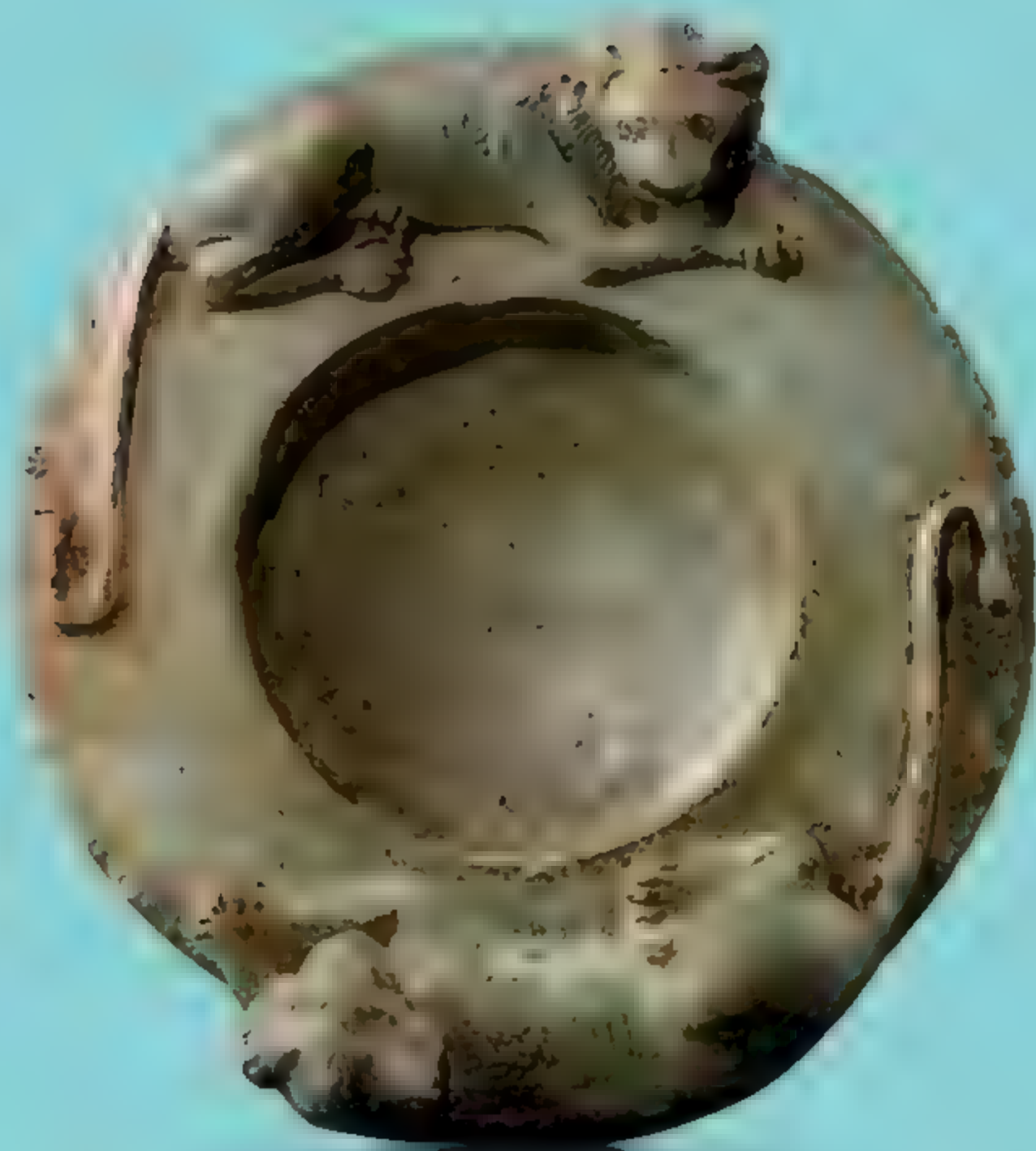
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Cup with Painted and Relief Floral Decoration

Egyptian, late 3rd–1st century B.C.

Blue and black faience

D: 13.2 cm (1:1)

Despite small cracks, the cup is complete and virtually intact. The glaze is only partially preserved, primarily on the lower part of the vessel. The shape of this cup, which was probably formed in a mold, is extremely simple: the low and rounded body without handles terminates in a broad, convex lip.

Made of faience, this form is rarely documented, but it is still attested in the first century B.C., as evidenced by a number of examples that were probably produced in Egypt and exported to the Hellenic world.

The decoration is distinguished by its extraordinary richness and variation, as well as by its precise symmetrical structure. Partly painted and partly in very low relief, it is composed of motifs exclusively inspired by the plant world or borrowed from the Corinthian order.

Inside the vessel, a central rosette is surrounded by two different types of leaves: four acanthus leaves, each with a curved end, and four slender elongated leaves separated by stems provided with a small triangular leaf. The two-color scheme helps to differentiate the details, as does the expert use of the relief, which creates a beautiful play of light and shade, as if the leaves were being shaken by the wind.

An egg-and-dart frieze (Ionian kyma) separates the large tondo from the edge, while languets adorn the lip.

The exterior wall is decorated with four rows of small leaves in relief and, on the bottom, a large calyx of lanceolate leaves and a rosette.

Despite the use of typically Egyptian material and technique, the form and especially the decorative motifs are inspired by Greek, or even Achaemenid art, as evidenced in particular by the comparison with precious metal drinking vessels from the Hellenistic period that this piece was intended to imitate. Numerous production centers were located not only in Egypt but also elsewhere in the Mediterranean basin and in the Near East.

The decoration of this cup can also be linked with that of another form of drinking vessel—more popular than the low cup and more often made of faience—the hemispherical cup without handles. Decorated with a central rosette under the bottom and palmettes on the body, these vessels, which would have been used as tableware at banquets, show a rich decoration based on the alternation of elements in relief and two-colored painted parts (light blue background with black or dark blue details).

PROVENANCE

Acquired by M. S. Aboutaam in 1980; Gwain McKinley; R. Symes collection, from 1988; acquired from C. Edle, London, 2005.

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Bowls with plant reliefs

BUSZ, R. and GERCKE, P., *Türkis und Azur: Quarzkeramik im Orient und Okzident* (Kassel, 1999), pp. 371–372, nos. 216–218

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Hellenistic silver vessel

PFROMMER, M., *Metallwork from Hellenized East*, (Mainz, 1993) (see mostly p. 34, fig. 31, from Nihavend, Iran, and p. 55, fig. 43, from the Fayum).

PFROMMER, M., *Studien zu alexandrinischer und grossgriechischer Toreutik frühhellenistischer Zeit* (AF 16), (Berlin, 1987).

Cup with Stylized Floral Decoration

Syrian, late 2nd–1st century B.C.

Sky blue and black faience

D: 12.5 cm (1:1)

The cup is complete, but it was reassembled from three large fragments. The glaze, with the very pale blue reflections, is clearly visible on the outside, especially at the rim.

Supported by a small ring-shaped foot, the cup has a wide flat rim and a low body whose wall is inclined and straight.

Although highly stylized, the decoration is largely inspired by the plant world. Against the light background of the faience, the motifs painted in blackish brown sometimes show up in positive, sometimes in negative (flowers). On the inside, linear friezes surround the large tondo composed of a rosette with two vertically elongated petals, while smaller flowers and “spoked wheels” alternate on the rim. Lines of different lengths, decorated with tooth patterns, separate the different elements on the rim. The exterior is undecorated.

This piece belongs to a small series of cups that, thanks to a discovery in Palmyra, were dated to the late Hellenistic period. With a size generally ranging between 10 and 13 cm in diameter, they were local imitations—certainly produced in the Near East (Levantine coast, Syria, or the Decapolis; the exact location remains unknown)—of the more famous and richer Egyptian two-colored faience cups (see (86) et (88)). Their shape does not display significant variations, and their decoration most often depicts the same motifs, with flowers or garlands, sometimes so stylized that they become unrecognizable and appear to be simple geometric patterns.

This specimen, with its thick but careful lines and elements that symmetrically occupy the available space, is certainly one of the finest examples in the group.

PROVENANCE

Acquired by M. S. Aboutaam in Beirut in the early 1980's.

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Marbled Cup

Near Eastern (Syria or Mesopotamia), 3rd–1st century B.C.

Light blue faience and dark brown faience

D: 12.7 cm (1:1)

This cup is complete and other than some minor cracks and chips on the rim, it is in excellent condition. The light blue glaze is partially visible along the edge.

The shape of this cup is almost the same as that of (87) with its small ring foot that supports the low, semi-spherical body, that terminates in a broad, flat edge. But the manufacturing technique employed here, known as marbled decoration, makes this piece unusual. This special appearance, imitating the surface of some stone objects, was obtained by mixing, twisting and grinding two different colored pastes. One containing copper oxides which turned into a light blue color, and the other, a high-grade ferrous manganese material gave it the dark brown-black segments. **The combination of geometric designs resulting from this mix is not only original, but also unique.**

Although rare, this technique was already attested in the 3rd millennium since the New Kingdom. The faience craftsmen of Thutmose III used this technique, where he often mixed with molten glass, for the manufacture of small jars or polychromatic goblets with a unique decoration. Later, it appeared again in the architecture of the great palaces of the Achaemenid kings in the 6th and 5th century B.C. (the Apadana of Susa in Iran) for the manufacture of floor bricks whose appearance would certainly imitate the marbled surface of the stone. A compartmentalized marbled faience pyxis whose lid is still preserved with a bronze knob and pivot, which may date to the Persian period, is now housed in the Louvre.

Despite the absence of precise parallels for this cup, the chronology seems to be determined by the comparison with (87), which belongs to a group of Near Eastern cups dated to the Hellenistic period. Local imitations of Egyptian two-colored faience bowls (86)

PROVENANCE

Ex-Gawain McKinley and K. Ishiguro collection.

EXHIBITED

Tokyo, 1975.

PUBLISHED IN

Exhibition of Ancient Glass and Glazed Ware collected by G. McKinley and K. Ishiguro, Tokyo, 1975, n. 39.

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On marbled faience:

BUSZ, R. and P. GERCKE, *Turkis und Azur, Quarzkeramik im Orient und Okzident*, (Kassel, 1999), no. 173.

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FREDMAN, F. D. (ed.), *Gifts of the Nile: Ancient Egyptian Faience*, exhibition, Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence (London, 1998), p. 15, no. 90 (polychromatic small jar), p. 219, no. 94.



Amphora decorated with a Gold-Leaf Wreath

Egyptian, Hellenistic period (3rd century B.C.)

Blue faience, gold leaf

H: 34 cm

The vessel (which is entirely blue including the inside) is virtually complete and in remarkable condition, with the exception of the handles and one of the necks being missing. The glaze is largely preserved with the intense blue color and luster still visible on the neck.

The polychromy includes a purplish black paint on the protome of the handles and neck, probably from the base for the gold leaf gilding. There are also signs of a paler yellow color on the satyr's hair and the geometrically patterned frieze on the shoulder and base. The rectangles in this pattern alternate between blue and yellow. The frieze has meanders and rosettes and you can see light traces of gold leaf gilding.

The vessel is composed of several elements, which were modeled separately and assembled before firing. The body would have been wheel-made as there are no visible joints between any molded parts, especially on the inside, while the handles and the necks were molded. The gold wreath, which is composed of lanceolate leaves (olive tree or laurel tree) tied to either side by a gold thread, is placed around the neck without being attached to the vessel.

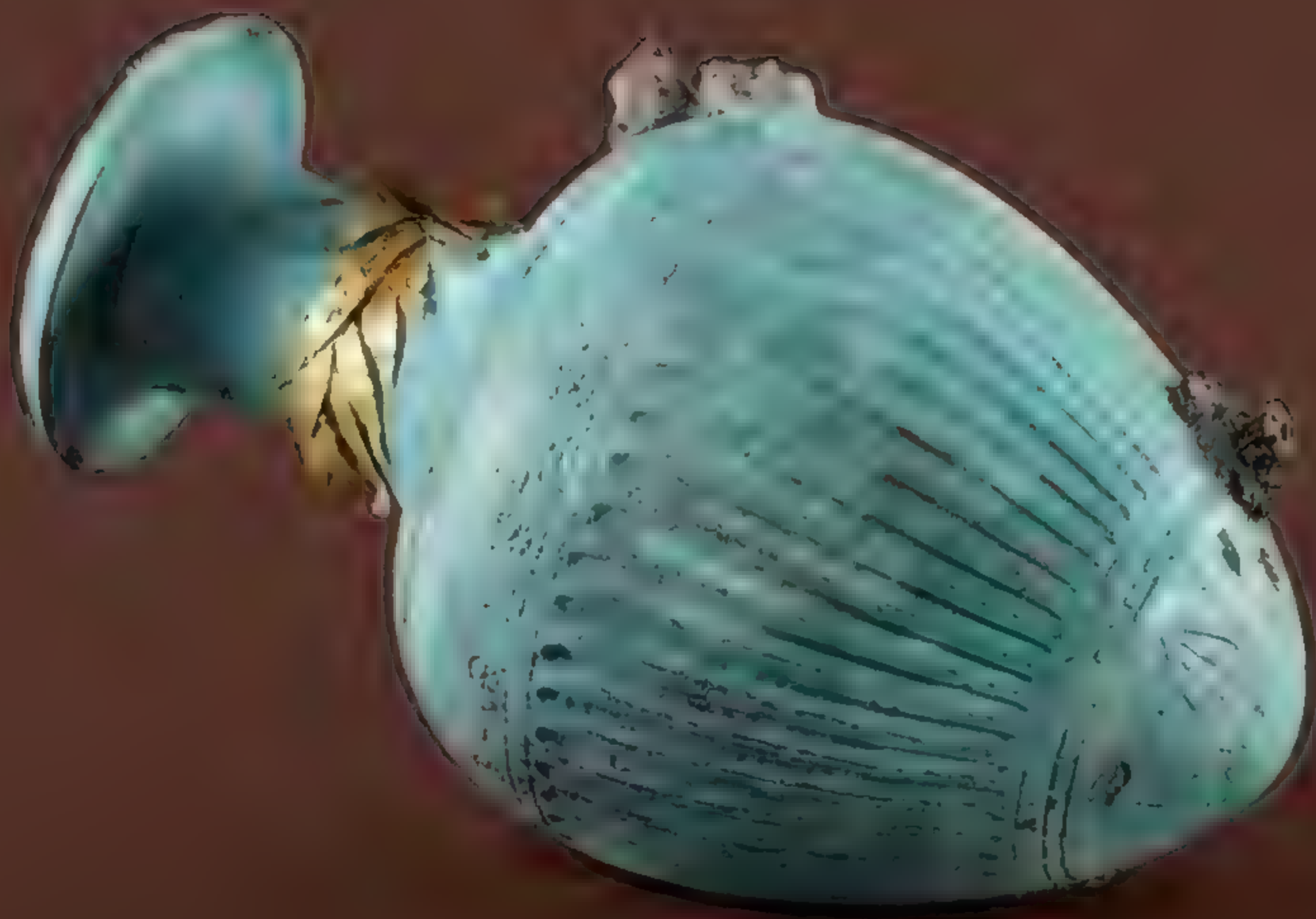
The amphora, with its ovoid body, has the particularity of not having a foot. The vertical balance would have certainly been ensured by a cylindrical low support of a type that was widespread in the Hellenistic period, and that may probably be compared to the related gold examples found in Italy (Etruria, Taranto). The shoulder is flat; the cylindrical, flared neck terminates in a beveled lip embellished with a frieze of plastic beads located on the top. Only the marks of the two handles are left on the body and lip as well as one of the two heads that adorned the lower end (his pointed ears indicate that they were young satyrs). The other formal distinctive feature of this amphora is constituted by the small necks that are located near the bottom, on the same axis as the handles, which could be easily covered with a finger. This system would have allowed for precise pouring of the liquid from the amphora. The neck, still in place, represents the head of a big dog or wolf.

The decoration is emphasized by the presence of many incised patterns including the vertical grooves on the body and the rosettes surrounded by sepals on the base. There are friezes with incised meanders and rosettes along with volutes and leaves on the shoulder, and the Ionic kyma is displayed on the lip.

This vessel is unusual for its size and, mostly, for its rich ornamentation. Its closest faience parallel is another amphora housed in an American private collection, which has the same formal features but whose decoration is less sophisticated and less accurate (the proportions are not as well balanced, the wreath is plastically modeled in faience, the necks are simple pipes, the polychromy is less elaborate, etc.). Among all of the related amphoras, especially those provided with two necks, there are two other outstanding examples. One being the glass and gold Ombria amphora (Black Sea) in Berlin, whose handles, figures and necks are golden, and the other is one of the gold-leaf amphoras belonging to the Treasury of Panagyurishte (modern-day Bulgaria).

Although these examples were clearly influenced by metal models, the elegant shape with the elongated thin proportions can more probably be related to the Panathenaic black-glazed amphoras, especially in the version featuring a golden wreath on the neck. These are generally produced in the colonies of southern Italy; these vessels (probably intended for the funeral sphere) are dated to the second half of the 4th century B.C. A piece like ours can be regarded as a Hellenistic adaptation of these objects of Greek tradition, and perfectly translates the exuberance and inventiveness of Ptolemaic potters in the early Hellenistic period.





Unfortunately, no element enables us to determine the exact purpose of this amphora. Like its closest parallels mentioned above, it confidently was a luxury item - perhaps unique in its kind - for a high-ranking customer. It might have served in the cult or funeral sphere, as indicated by the presence of the two necks (an element that links this example to the rhyton, a worship vessel which was largely widespread in the ancient world): the heads of the satyrs (Dionysian world) and the golden wreath. Or perhaps in the private sphere at special celebrations or banquets, or as a gift between officials or persons belonging to the noble classes of society.

PROVENANCE

Acquired by M. Sleiman Aboutaam in London in 1990 from Gawain Mc Kinley and then in the family collection.

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In general on Hellenistic faience (Alexandria)

NENNA, M.D. et al., *La vascelle en faïence d'époque gréco-romaine, Catalogue du Musée gréco-romain d'Alexandrie*, (Paris, 2000)



Figural Support of an Incense Burner or Lamp

Egyptian, Ptolemaic Period (end of the 3rd–2nd century B.C.)

Light and dark blue faience

H: 18.5 cm (I:I)

The object is incomplete and was reassembled from large fragments. There are traces of light and dark blue glaze most visible on the miniature friezes.

This support, made of an extremely thin faience, is cylindrical in shape and tapers upward. The upper part, now lost, would have probably been completed with a small circular plate intended to support an incense burner or oil lamp.

The body of the vessel bears a decoration in high relief (the figures were modeled separately and then applied to the smooth surface of the support), which is divided into three stacked friezes whose height decreases from the bottom. Each frieze is framed by a thin cornice, below there is a decorative band with several finely incised figures. Storage conditions no longer enable us to identify precise scenes, but one can still discern draped and sometimes winged figures running or dancing, that emerge from the background highlighted in blue.

The upper frieze is composed of winged children (Erotes) with chubby bodies either nude or wrapped in their cloaks. They seem to perform a lively dance, while playing the zither and the double flute.

The central frieze depicts a Greek banquet where each couch, provided with molded feet, includes a cushion and a pair of pleated drapery adorned with a checkerboard pattern. Six guests, wearing crowns on their heads, are reclined on five couches. One couch displays a man talking to a woman with his arm around her shoulder, while she simply sits on the edge of the couch with her cloak slipped from her shoulders to her hips. The next couch depicts a man raising a rhyton and turning to the left to discuss with the woman holding a cup on the neighboring couch. Her hairstyle is special, since she sports a Nubian wig with large locks. Another couch has a guest raising his right arm, accompanied by a monkey which is visible between the folds of his cloak and the last guest might be a musician since a zither is suspended behind him in the background.

The last frieze, in the lower part, features the three most unusual and enigmatic scenes. A rider defeats a naked opponent whose oval shield has been thrown on the ground and the enemy begs for mercy with his arm raised. The rider is dressed in a Greek breastplate but wears the Egyptian *nemes* and atef crown and brandishes a weapon, which is not a spear or a sword but a beam of lightning, that is to say a Zeus thunderbolt. Further away there is a woman, wearing an Attic helmet and armed with a round shield and a long-handled ax, marching against a lion, which is standing on its hind legs and is already under attack by a dog. The woman simply wears a short tunic that reveals one of her breasts. Behind the lion appears a war chariot with two horses at full gallop, led by a winged figure who can be identified as Nike, the Greek personification of Victory.

This support, whose interpretation remains obscure, is quite unique in its genre. Although the style and iconography are confidently Greek, the material faience refers to Egypt, where it was a distinctive feature. Other elements of this piece recall Egypt and its age-old culture, such as the Nubian hairstyle of a guest, the small monkey and, especially, the *nemes* and the *atef* crown of the rider which chronologically date this object to the Ptolemaic period, between the late 3rd and 2nd century B.C.

In this context, the rider might probably be identified with a pharaoh (Alexander himself or a Ptolemy). As a hypothesis, one could imagine that this support would commemorate the victory of Arsinoë III and Ptolemy IV against the Seleucid troops in 217 B.C., at Raphia, which would justify the presence of Nike on her chariot. The iconography of the Pharaoh (Ptolemy IV here), would refer to the old Egyptian custom of representing the sovereign defeating his enemy like Horus defeating Seth, but armed with the thunderbolt. The female figure attacking a lion would be an Artemis/Isis, who would in this situation, glorify the military talents of Arsinoë III present on the battlefield of Raphia.

Generally speaking, the decorative profusion and extreme quality of the workmanship are the striking features of this object, and make it a prestigious, luxury item, which was probably used at official banquets or offered as an ex-voto in a large shrine.

PROVENANCE

Acquired in Germany in 2001

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Bust of a Child

Egyptian, Roman Imperial Period (1st century B.C.–1st century A.D.)

“Egyptian blue” frit

H: 2.2 cm (*enlarged*)

The piece appears to be complete, although the edges are chipped in places and the face is slightly damaged. The surface is partially covered with brown sand, but it is still shiny, especially on the left cheek.

Despite its current condition, this piece may certainly be considered a small masterpiece of the art of ancient faience. The oval face, the nuanced modeling of the cheeks, the realistic shape of the eyes, mouth, and nose, the accurate work of the hair are all details that look as perfect as those seen on pieces of silverware or glyptic.

The way the hair descends down the neck and the rendering of the locks fix the dating of the object in the early imperial period.

In this miniature bust of a child, the head and neck are modeled in three dimensions, while the shoulders simply emerge in high relief and are soldered to an elliptically shaped background. The original support, into which this sculptural element was inserted, is now lost. The absence of close parallels precludes determining what the original object was, but it might have been a medallion, a cup, a finger ring, or a sort of panel with other busts of deities or notables of a single family.

Unfortunately, no element enables us to identify the figure represented. Although the child lacks wings, the face with the somewhat chubby and idealized forms recalls a small Eros, but it could also be a high-ranking child who belonged to a prominent family in contemporary Egypt, or even a member of the imperial family.

The use of vitreous materials (frit, faience, or glass) to fashion miniature portraits is uncommon but attested throughout the Roman period (at least until the fourth century), both in Egypt and in other regions of the empire. Among the most famous contemporary examples, two portraits of Augustus should be mentioned: both are slightly larger than this bust, one is made of faience (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), the other of glass (Römisch-Germanische Museum, Cologne).

PROVENANCE

Acquired by M. Sleiman Aboutaam in 1997.

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Erotic group

Egyptian, Roman imperial period (1st century A.D.)

Light blue and black faience

H: 7.9 cm (*enlarged*)

The upper part of the group, consisting of the torso of a male figure, is lost. The surface of the faience is covered with a light blue glaze that retains its original luster and with black highlights for the hair and the genitals of the two figures. A small hole pierced at the end of the phallus indicates that this group could be suspended and probably was an amulet.

The group depicts the mating of two figures in a strange position, to say the least. The woman is seated on the floor, which is represented by a small circular flat base; her body is slender and thin, but her legs and arms seem too short. She wears a headdress that covers her ears and frames her face, displaying delicate, youthful features. Quietly striding on her shoulders is a male figure who, with his short, thin legs, is better characterized as a dwarf (Bes?) than as a monkey. His physical appearance shows an even more remarkable anomaly: he has a very long, thin phallus that descends to the right of the woman's head and then alongside her body so as to perform the love act. The woman, however, does not appear at all concerned with what is happening to her, since she supports her head with her left hand placed under her chin, while her other hand nonchalantly holds the enormous phallus of her companion.

Sexual life in ancient Egypt is a rather unstudied subject, although there are many allusions to the sexual behavior of the Egyptians, especially in the iconography; this, however, is usually less clearly present than in the framework of Greco-Roman culture, and it is only rarely expressed in the official art of the court. Nevertheless, even in Egypt during the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, there are an impressive number of erotic amulets and statuettes (many of them made of faience), which could be defined as popular or even grotesque (borrowing the term from contemporary Hellenistic statuettes) in which the male figure has an oversized phallus with often surprising shapes. Although the woman cannot be identified with any familiar figure, the male figure frequently appears in the guise of Bes, a dwarf, or a monkey.

These small sculptures generally had a prophylactic value in relation to fertility and fecundity.

This group, for which no precise parallel can be cited, echoes an iconographic scheme documented in the Late Period, in which the god Bes (sometimes replaced by a monkey) appears on the shoulders of a woman (often a woman giving birth). These objects served as protective talismans for pregnant women and young children.

PROVENANCE

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PUBLISHED IN

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Model of a Temple

Roman (Egypt), 1st century A.D.

Blue faience

L: 24.5 cm

An important fragment containing a large portion of the roof and of the entablature, as well as the upper naos are the only sections preserved; the accuracy of the reconstruction is assured on account of the symmetry that characterizes Greco-Roman temple architecture.

The whitish gray, rather coarse-textured paste (a typical mixture for pottery in this late period) is covered with a thick cobalt blue glaze, which approaches yellow-green for the wreath of the roof and for the architectural decorations in relief. The glaze is unevenly applied on the surface (in places, the layer exceeds two millimeters thick).

The shape of this temple of the Corinthian order is simple without a colonnade (per style); the naos is a square with the corners emphasized by four pilasters. The pilasters are surmounted by capitals, on which the distinctive features of this architectural order (the form of the bell, the acanthus leaves and the volutes) are rendered by slightly stylized, yet clear outlines. Two pilasters (or columns?), now lost, once supported the porch roof, making this a temple in antis (the supporting elements left traces on the ceiling). The shape of the entrance, with the angular lintel carved in thick relief, recalls the architecture of the door of an Egyptian temple.

The entablature includes an Ionic *kyma* (the leaves are regular and rounded) with an astragal frieze (row of beads) above and a frieze of dentils below. The pediment is smooth.

On the roof in relief is a garland composed of elongated leaves and berry clusters resembling corymbes.

Although terracotta or faience models of temples are rare in later periods of Egyptian art, other examples have been found that represent either Egyptian structures (model in the Egyptian Museum, Turin) or, like the present example and a few terracotta lamps, Greco-Roman ones. The models might have had a votive function.

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Ex: San Giorgi collection, Rome, late 19th century

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Civilisation des Égyptiens, Les arts de la célébration, Musée égyptien de Turin, (Milan, 1989), fig. 125







Amphora with Applied Floral Decoration

Egyptian, Roman Imperial Period (1st century A.D.)

Dark and light blue faience

H: 22.2 cm

The vessel is complete, but it has been reglued; small repairs are visible. Despite minor cracks, the glaze is very well preserved. The paste is heavy and grayish in color. The glaze covers the entire surface of the vase (including under the foot). Purple-blue is used for the handles and the outside and inside of the body. The inner neck, the wide rim, and the bottom of the base are painted in light blue; the motifs in relief vary from light green to yellow. The various elements of the form (base, body, neck, handles, decorations) were made separately—probably by using molds—and assembled before drying.

Careful examination reveals the maker's process for the decorative elements. First, the vessel was painted completely with a layer of light blue glaze. It was then highlighted with dark blue and lead-based yellow for the plastic decorations. Thick deposits of dark blue glaze, as well as symmetrical traces left by the *pernette* that supported the amphora in the kiln, can still be seen under the vessel's foot.

This amphora gives a remarkable impression of strength, not only because of its weight and its perfect preservation, but also because of its shape, the silhouette of which is quite massive. The wide and rather low body tapers downward and is supported by a flat, disc-shaped foot. The cylindrical neck terminates in a flat, horizontal rim; the inner outline with a deep groove was certainly intended to receive a lid, which is still preserved on other vessels of the same type. Two short vertical ribbons, attached to either side of the upper shoulder and to the rim, comprise the handles; they are decorated with vertically incised lines and three plastic knobs at handle level.

The relief decoration represents three plant motifs, each resulting from the application of countless faience tongues one after another: (1) a horizontal wreath follows the outline of the shoulder just below the handles, and on the body (2) a bush of some kind alternates with (3) a stem similar to a small palm tree.

Egyptian faience workshops in the early Roman Imperial period produced many amphoras of this type. At that time, craftsmen introduced important innovations at the formal, technical, and decorative levels: vases became larger, and amphoras and vessels with a trumpet-shaped neck dominated the repertoire of forms. The whitish gray faience was less pure, thicker, and heavier, and the very dark blue glaze, together with incised or sculpted motifs, was introduced, as in the present piece.

The production site for this type of amphora is difficult to establish, but its Egyptian origin is not in doubt. The largest number of fragments of this type comes from the Fayum, the possible seat of the main workshop, while others have been excavated elsewhere: Upper and Middle Egypt, region of Alexandria, Libyan oases. The rather large number of complete amphoras that have survived suggests that at least a portion of them would have had a funerary purpose, perhaps as an urn intended to store the ashes of the deceased. The presence of the garland on the shoulder of the present example appears to confirm this hypothesis.

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Ex-Denys Sutton collection, acquired between 1957 and 1962

PUBLISHED IN

Apollo Magazine, July 1962 (cover photo).

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Skyphos with a Pomegranate Branch in Relief

Roman (Asia Minor), 1st century A.D.

Yellow- and green-glazed terra-cotta

H: 8.4 cm (l:l)

The vessel has been reassembled, and minor restorations are evident in the foot. The glaze is perfectly preserved. The beige terra-cotta is covered with ocher-yellow glaze on the outside and green glaze on the inside of the vase.

The skyphos has a high cylindrical body with a straight wall, supported by a small circular foot, which was probably modeled separately and attached before firing. The two ring-shaped handles are surmounted by a horizontal thumb-piece that forms a kind of extension of the lip: it facilitates and stabilizes the handling of the vessel. The decoration in relief (probably made using the technique of *terra sigillata*) includes a single repeating motif on both faces: a long sinuous branch with pointed leaves and circular fruits, in which archaeologists recognize either small pomegranates or myrtle berries.

As on many vessels made of precious metal, of which this skyphos is a beautiful imitation, the use of plant branches for decoration is not rare: among the plants most frequently represented are the olive, the wild grape, and the oak. A symbolic meaning is often sought to explain them: the pomegranate, the fruit of Aphrodite, was a symbol of fertility; the myrtle, which served for the crown of a bride, was not only linked to marriage and fecundity, but was also given to underground deities and deposited in tombs during burials. The presence of these plants, however, might have simply been a response to an aesthetic problem, especially since these flora were so widespread in the Mediterranean world.

Skyphoi are among the most documented forms of glazed terra-cotta in the workshops of Asia Minor. Thanks to its excellent state of preservation and its fine technical and artistic qualities, this piece is an outstanding example. According to the classification of A. Hochuli-Gysel, it belongs to skyphoi of type 1a—characterized by the rounded and more slender outline of the lower part—and would be a product of a micro-Asiatic workshop based, perhaps, in Tarsus. It can be dated to the early imperial period.

The ancient Near Eastern technique of adding leaded glaze to a previously fired terra-cotta vessel was adopted by several workshops in Asia Minor toward the end of the Hellenistic period. The process required a second firing to fix the glaze. This method was certainly used since it allowed a better imitation of vessels in precious metal than did the usual black-figure pottery; among the most commonly attested forms, most were borrowed from the repertory of metalworking, for example, the skyphos, oinochoe, or kantharos.

In the early imperial period, the competition of glass, an easy-to-work material and available everywhere, and easily reusable, prevented glazed pottery from achieving great commercial success, despite qualitatively good results and widespread distribution.

See also (96) and (97).

PROVENANCE

Ex: Michael and Judith Steinhardt collection, New York.

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Amphora with Acanthus Leaves and Rosettes in Relief

Roman (Asia Minor), 1st century A.D.
Green- and ocher-yellow glazed terra-cotta
H: 22 cm

The amphora has been reassembled and shows some restorations: the glaze is partially erased. The beige terra-cotta is coated with an ocher-yellow glaze on the inside and a dark green glaze on the outside of the vessel.

The amphora has an ovoid body with a high cylindrical neck that flares into a molded lip; the disc-shaped base and the vertical handles were applied to the upper belly and just below the lip. The decoration in low relief is entirely based on the plant world and imitates in many details the patterns that were made famous by precious metal vessels: the body is decorated with three elegant slender acanthus leaves on each side of the body; a rosette with six heart-shaped petals is placed at the base of the central leaves. On the handles, where the composition is very elaborate, are a palmette, some volutes, and a lotus flower, while a triangular leaf, probably from a wild grape, is imprinted at the base of each handle.

Although there are other examples of ovoid amphoras, the form is rather rare in the repertoire of glazed pottery produced by the workshops of Asia Minor (the most common vessel-types were skyphoi and one-handled jugs).

The manufacturing technique for this piece (quality of the terracotta and glaze) and the decorative motifs are similar to those that characterize the productions of one of the most important workshops of the first century A.D. located in Tarsus, an ancient port city in Cilicia. This example differs from the others mostly because of its rich and diversified decoration, which makes it one of the most remarkable pieces in this series.

In the Hellenistic and Roman periods, several workshops in Asia Minor, and later in Italy, adopted the oriental technique of leaded glazing on the terra-cotta surface, certainly in order to imitate the shiny appearance of metal vessels. This method required two phases of firing: one to fire the clay and the second, at lower temperatures, to fix the glaze. As was the case for other groups of terra-cotta vessels in the early Imperial period, the competition of glass, an easy-to-work material, available everywhere and easily reusable, prevented glazed pottery from achieving great commercial success, even though the quality of the glazed pottery was good and the distribution wide.

See also (95) and (97)

PROVENANCE

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Oinochoe with a Vine Branch in Relief

Roman, 1st century A.D.

Brown- and green-glazed terracotta

H: 13 cm (1:1)

This oinochoe is complete and virtually intact, except for minor chips. The beige terracotta is covered with brown glaze on the vesse and on the neck, green glaze on the body and under the base. Irregular dark green drips adorn the neck.

The neck is high and cylindrical, the flat lip is equipped with a spout. The narrow shoulder was modeled with a stick, the semi-spherical body is supported by a circular base; the vertical handle is ribbon-shaped.

The decoration in low relief runs all around the vessel. It is composed of two identical branches of wild vine with triangular leaves and corymbs. The branches, certainly made from the same mold, appear to be suspended from the shoulder of the oinochoe at the level of their central leaf. This motif, which is obviously related to Dionysiac iconography, confirms the use of this form as a jug for serving wine.

Excluding products from Naukratis and/or Rhodes from the Orientalizing period, Greek potters never really adopted faience as a material for the manufacturing of vessels or statuettes. Even in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, artists chose basic terra-cotta simply covered with glaze to render the shiny effect of a surface, imitating the appearance of metal. This process was rather complicated: it probably originated in the Near East and became popular first in Asia Minor and then in Italy. It required two firing phases: the first to fire the vesse that had been modeled on a wheel and the second to fix (cook) the leaded glazes, recognizable by their characteristic yellow-brown coloration (the greener shades were obtained by adding copper oxide).

Despite production of high-quality vesse s and their wide geographic distribution, the success of glazed pottery remained rather limited, certainly because of the competition of glass, which from the first century onward supplanted ceramics as a raw material for the manufacture of all kinds of vessels.

According to the classification of A. Hochuli-Gysel, this oinochoe would be the work of one of the most important workshops in the first century A.D. located in the port city of Tarsus in Cilicia (a type 2 jug, Tarsus workshop group 3). Among the closest parallels for this piece is a jug housed in the Greco-Roman Museum of Alexandria, which probably comes from the same workshop.

See also (96).

PROVENANCE

Acquired on the Swiss art market in 2001

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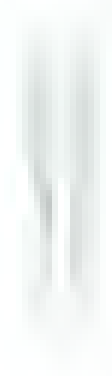
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Libation Cup Supported by Two Bulls

Parthian (Syria), 2nd–3rd century A.D.

Green-glazed terra-cotta

H: 13 cm (1:1)

The object is complete but slightly chipped. The glaze still largely retains its original luster. The piece was hand-modeled from pinkish beige terra-cotta entirely covered (including under the base and between the legs of the animals) with an emerald green glaze showing several blue specks and minor cracks.

The structure of the libation cup is divided into several parts. Two bovine figurines stand side by side on a square base. Although their shapes are simple and somewhat unsophisticated, they can be immediately identified by their horns, tapered muzzies, and vertically projecting necks. A large cylindrical stalk applied to the back of the animals supports a small cup whose outline recalls a funnel.

The stylized outlines of the two statuettes and their blue-green color recall the figurines of horse and rider of the Seleuco-Parthian period excavated in Susa (Fam, in central western Iran). But it is more to the northwest, in the city of Dura-Europos (on the banks of the Euphrates in Syria) that the closest parallels for this piece were uncovered, often in temples and sometimes in private houses. As in the present example, such objects are comprised of several elements and were probably used as offering holders or incense burners. This cup supported by two bulls is almost identical to another, which is supported by a pair of two-headed bulls (their hind legs are replaced by second hindquarters). Glazed terra-cottas were produced in the ancient Near East in a vast region comprising northern Syria, Iraq, parts of Iran, the coastal areas of the Persian Gulf, and even parts of Somalia. They appeared in the Hellenistic period and remained popular for about a millennium, certainly contributing to the transmission to Arab potters of the skills and knowledge of their counterparts from the Greco-Roman period.

Despite this large-scale production (the most widespread form was the ovoid or the piriform double-handled flask), elaborate objects such as the libation cup under discussion were very rare. Excavation data indicate that the use of glazed terra-cottas differed from that of common pottery intended for daily use: the glazed products were generally meant for funerary rituals or as ex-votos in sanctuaries. The low capacity of glazed vessels in the form of small flasks or cups, etc., did not often justify their use in daily life.

PROVENANCE

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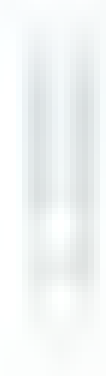
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Female-Headed Rhyton (Goddess Anahita?) with the Protome of a Gazelle

Parthian, ca. 2nd–3rd century A.D.

Cobalt blue glazed terracotta

H: 35.5 cm

Despite minor chips (mostly on the neck), the piece is complete. The thick layer of glaze, which covers the entire surface, retains its luster, but the original dark blue color is only partially preserved and almost exclusively on the inside (the outer surface is now grayish white). **The grayish colored terracotta is thick and heavy; a hole for pouring the liquid was pierced behind the chin of the gazelle.**

This very large rhyton is comprised of three different elements (a–c), which were made separately and assembled before firing. The potter used at least two different techniques, since the upper semi-spherical part was turned (wheel-made), while the other two were molded (or even modeled, as was the muzzle of the animal). (a) The lower part represents the head and neck of a saiga gazelle, characterized by a triangular muzzle and long horns. This caprid was frequently represented in Sasanian art, especially in silverware, but as part of an artistic tradition that can be traced far back in Near Eastern iconography. (b) At the center of the rhyton is a female head with curly hair arranged on the forehead, neck, and ears. She wears a large headpiece (?) with a complex bipartite structure that cannot be identified in detail due to the imprecise modeling. She is adorned with a necklace and a pair of earrings. (c) Above, the details of the headgear fade into the upper part turned in the shape of a vessel with a small ribbon-handle and a thick flared rim.

The interpretation of the female figure is highly uncertain: it might be Anahita, the goddess of abundance, rain, and fertility (who shows similarities with the ancient Near Eastern goddess Inanna/Ishtar) or a dancer like those appearing on silver drinking vessels.

A rhyton had two functions: a drinking vessel (in this case, the drinker would let the liquid flow directly into his mouth, holding the vessel over his head) or a libation vessel. Although it is just an imitation of the precious metal specimens reserved for nobles and dignitaries, such an important piece certainly did not belong to everyday tableware. It is no longer possible to indicate its precise use, but one can imagine that it was used for particular rituals or at "less official" banquets than those of the kings or of the great shrines.

There are only a limited number of parallels for this piece: the rhyton in the Louvre shows the same typology (handled jug, female head, and gazelle), while the other mentioned rhyta seem to be part of a slightly different group. Their containing parts provided with two handles and has the shape of the neck of an amphora; an image in relief adorns the area above the head; the gazelle protome is smaller and less realistic.

It is also noteworthy that there is a certain relationship between the heads of the young women on the rhyta and the female faces that sometimes decorate the lids of certain Near Eastern glazed terracotta sarcophagi (examples from Nippur and Susa).

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